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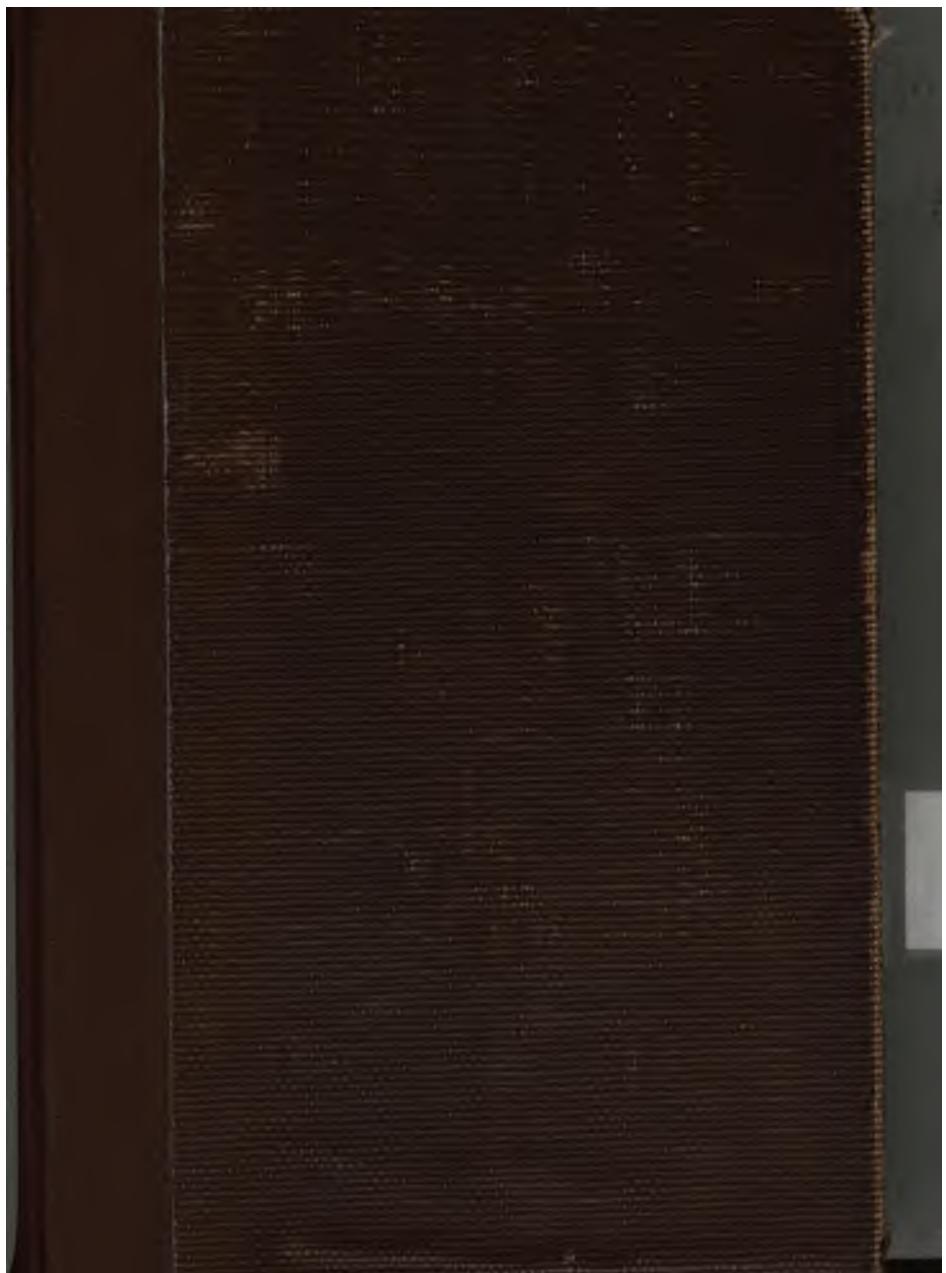
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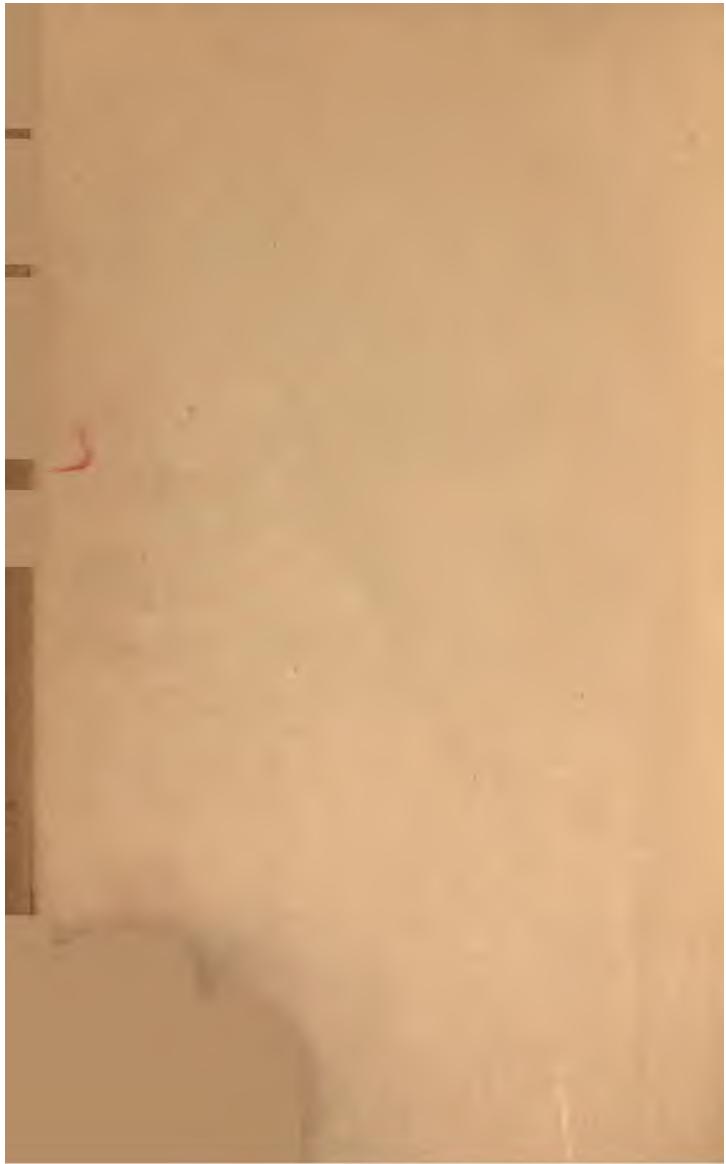


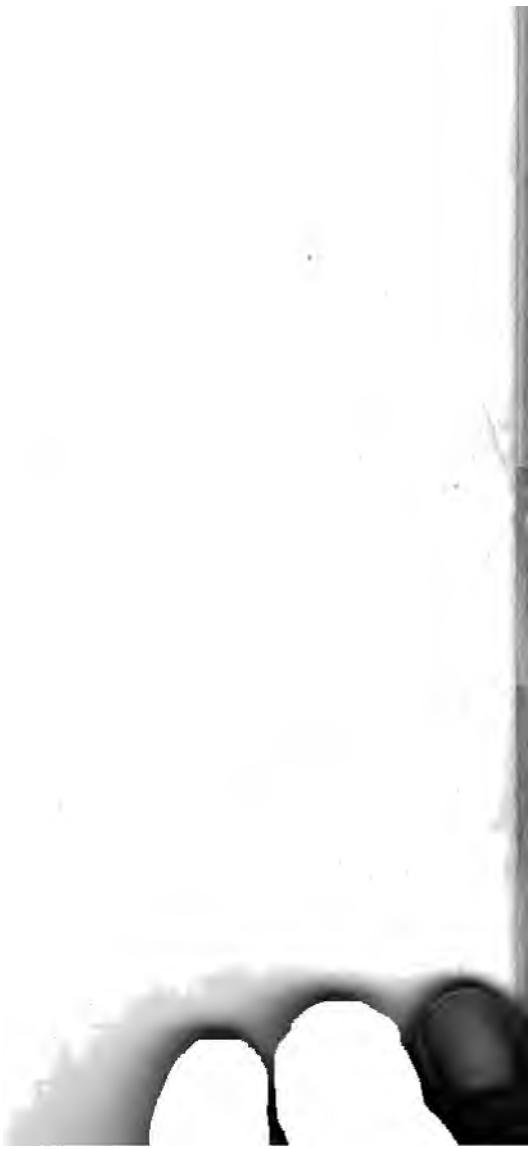


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# DONS AND LOVERS

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*by* D. H. LAWRENCE

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Introduction by JOHN MACY

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DONI AND LIVERIGHT  
PUBLISHERS :: :: NEW YORK

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## INTRODUCTION

An introduction to this book is as superfluous as a candle in front of a searchlight. But a convention of publishing seems to require that the candle should be here, and I am proud to be the one to hold it. About ten years ago I picked up from the pile of new books on my desk a copy of "Sons and Lovers" by a man of whom I had never heard, and I started to race through it with the immoral speed of the professional reviewer. But after a page or two I found myself reading, really reading. Here was—here is—a masterpiece in which every sentence counts, a book crammed with significant thought and beautiful, arresting phrases, the work of a singular genius whose gifts are more richly various than those of any other young English novelist.

To appreciate the rich variety of Mr. Lawrence we must read his later novels and his volumes of poetry. But "Sons and Lovers" reveals the range of his power. Here are combined and fused the hardest sort of "realism" and almost lyric imagery and rhythm. The speech of the people is that of daily life and the things that happen to them are normal adventures and accidents; they fall in love, marry, work, fail, succeed, die. But of their deeper emotions and of the relations of these little human beings to the earth and to the stars Mr. Lawrence makes something as near to poetry as prose dare be without violating proper "other harmony."

Take the marvelous paragraph on next to the last p  
(Mr. Lawrence depends so little on plot in the ordin  
sense of the word that it is perfectly fair to read the  
of his book first) :

"Where was he? One tiny upright speck of flesh,  
than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could  
bear it. On every side the immense dark silence seer  
pressing him, so tiny a spark, into extinction, and  
almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in wh  
everything was lost, went reaching out, beyond stars a  
sun, stars and sun, a few bright grains, went spinn  
round for terror, and holding each other in embrace, th  
in the darkness that outpassed them all, and left th  
tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesin  
at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing."

Such glorious writing (and this lovely passage  
matched by many others) lifts the book far above a no  
which is merely a story. I beg the reader to attend  
every line of it and not to miss a single one of the nu  
sentences that haunt, startle, and waylay. Some  
rhapsodical and cosmic, like the foregoing; others  
shrewd, "realistic" observations of things and people.  
one of his books Mr. Lawrence makes a character say  
think, that life is "mixed." That indicates his philosoph  
and his method. He blends the accurately literal a  
trivial with the immensely poetic.

To find a similar blending of minute diurnal detail a  
wide imaginative vision we must go back to two old  
novelists, Hardy and Meredith. I do not mean that Mr.  
Lawrence derives immediately from them or, indeed, that  
he is clearly the disciple of any master. I do feel sim  
that he is of the elder stature of Hardy and Meredith  
and I know of no other young novelist who is quite

worthy of their company. When I first tried to express this comparison, this kinship, I was roundly contradicted by a fellow-critic, who pointed out that Meredith and Hardy are utterly unlike each other and that therefore Mr. Lawrence cannot resemble both. To be sure, nothing is more odious than forced comparisons, nothing more tedious than to discover parallels between one work of art and another. An artist's mastery consists in his difference from other masters. But to refer a young man of genius to an older one, at the same time proclaiming his independence and originality, is a fair, if not very subtle, method of praising him.

Mr. Lawrence possesses supremely in his way a sense which Meredith and Hardy possess supremely in theirs, a sense of the earth, of nature, of the soil in which human nature is rooted. His landscapes are not painted cloth; they are the living land and sky, inseparable from the characters of the people who move upon the land and are pathetically adrift under the splendid inscrutable heavens. The beauty of the scene, for all its splendor, is usually sad; nature is baffling and tragic in its loveliness. Young people in love make ecstatic flights to the clouds and meet with Icarian disasters. From luminous moments they plunge into what Mr. Lawrence calls "the bitterness of ecstasy." Their pain outweighs their joy many times over, as in Hardy, and as in the more genial Meredith, whose rapturous digression played on a penny whistle in "Richard Feverel" is a heart-breaking preparation for the agonies that ensue.

Does not the phrase, "bitterness of ecstasy," sound, with all honor to Mr. Lawrence, as if Hardy might have made it? And would you be surprised if you found in Hardy the following sentence, which you will find on

page 172 of this book?—"Annie's candle flickered, and she whimpered as the first men appeared, and the limbs and bowed heads of six men struggled to climb into the room bearing the coffin that rode like sorrow on their living flesh."

Mr. Lawrence's tragic sense and the prevalent indifference to magnificent writing probably account for the fact that this fine novel did not instantly win a large audience. And, by the way, that tragic sense and that indifference of the multitude to great work render grotesquely absurd the unsuccessful attempt of the vicious anti-vice snoopers of New York to suppress Mr. Lawrence's "Women in Love." The weak and the ignorant are quite safe from this austere artist, for they will not read a third of the way through any of his novels.

Though with this book M. Lawrence took his place at once among the established veterans, nevertheless he belongs to our time, to this century, not to the age of Victoria. He is solid and mature, but he shows his youth in an inquisitive restlessness, and he betrays his modernity, if in no other way, by his interest in psychoanalysis. He has made amateurish excursions into that subject, which may or may not be a fruitful subject for a novelist to study. What he has brought back in the form of exposition interests me very little, but there is no doubt that his investigations have influenced his fiction, even this book which was written before everybody went a-freuding. The true novelist, the analyst of human character, has always been a psychologist in an untechnical sense. Before Henry James was Balzac; before Balzac was Goethe; before Goethe was the author of "Hamlet." Mr. Lawrence is too fine an artist to import into his art

the dubious lingo of psychoanalysis. I doubt, however, if without that muddled pseudo-science (muddled because the facts are muddled) Mr. Lawrence's later fiction would be just what it is. And the main theme of "Sons and Lovers" is the relation of Paul to his mother. No, it is not an Oedipus-Jocasta "complex" nor a Hamlet-Gertrude "complex," though you may assimilate this touching story to those complexes if you enjoy translating human life in such terms. The important thing is that Mr. Lawrence has created a new version of the old son-mother story which is more ancient than Sophocles and which shall be a modern instance as long as there are poets and novelists. In its lowest form it is the sentimental home-and-mother theme so dear, and rightly dear, to the hearts of the people. In its highest form it is tragic poetry. And only a little below that poetry is the tremendous pathos of Paul's last whimper in this book.

Let whoever cares to try analyze or psychoanalyze. I doubt if Mr. Lawrence himself could make clear work of explaining his book. It is not necessary. It is enough that he has made his characters understandable through and through, even their perplexities understandable as perplexities. That is all the artist, the interpreter of life in fiction, can do or ought to do. And to do it with clearness and fidelity and with magical command of words, the mysterious thing called "style," is to be a great artist.

Out with my candle! There is light on the next page.

JOHN MACY.



# *SONS AND LOVERS*

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE EARLY MARRIED LIFE OF THE MORELS

"THE Bottoms" succeeded to "Hell Row." Hell Row was a block of thatched, bulging cottages that stood by the brook-side on Greenhill Lane. There lived the colliers who worked in the little gin-pits two fields away. The brook ran under the alder-trees, scarcely soiled by these small mines, whose coal was drawn to the surface by donkeys that plodded wearily in a circle round a gin. And all over the countryside were these same pits, some of which had been worked in the time of Charles II, the few colliers and the donkeys burrowing down like ants into the earth, making queer mounds and little black places among the corn-fields and the meadows. And the cottages of these coalminers, in blocks and pairs here and there, together with odd farms and homes of the stockingers, straying over the parish, formed the village of Bestwood.

Then, some sixty years ago, a sudden change took place. The gin-pits were elbowed aside by the large mines of the financiers. The coal and iron field of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire was discovered. Carston, Waite and Co. appeared. Amid tremendous excitement, Lord Palmerston formally opened the company's first mine at Spinney Park, on the edge of Sherwood Forest.

About this time the notorious Hell Row, which through growing old had acquired an evil reputation, was burned n, and much dirt was cleansed away.

Carston, Waite and Co. found they had struck a good thing, so, down the valleys of the brooks from Se and Nuttall, new mines were sunk, until soon there w six pits working. From Nuttall, high up on the sandst among the woods, the railway ran, past the ruined pri of the Carthusians and past Robin Hood's Well, down Spinney Park, then on to Minton, a large mine am corn-fields; from Minton across the farm-lands of valleyside to Bunker's Hill, branching off there, and ri ning north to Beggarlee and Selby, that looks over Crich and the hills of Derbyshire; six mines like bl studs on the countryside, linked by a loop of fine ch the railway.

To accommodate the regiments of miners, Carsl Waite and Co. built the Squares, great quadrangles dwellings on the hillside of Bestwood, and then, in brook valley, on the site of Hell Row, they erected Bottoms.

The Bottoms consisted of six blocks of miners' dw ings, two rows of three, like the dots on a blank domino, and twelve houses in a block. This double of dwellings sat at the foot of the rather sharp slope fr Bestwood, and looked out, from the attic windows at le on the slow climb of the valley towards Selby.

The houses themselves were substantial and very deco One could walk all round, seeing little front gardens w auriculas and saxifrage in the shadow of the bottom blo sweet-williams and pinks in the sunny top block; see neat front windows, little porches, little privet hedges, dormer windows for the attics. But that was outside; t was the view on to the uninhabited parlours of all colliers' wives. The dwelling-room, the kitchen, was at back of the house, facing inward between the blocks, loing at a scrubby back garden, and then at the ash-p And between the rows, between the long lines of ash-p went the alley, where the children played and the wo gossiped and the men smoked. So, the actual conditi *of living in the Bottoms*, that was so well built and t

looked so nice, were quite unsavoury because people must live in the kitchen, and the kitchens opened on to that nasty alley of ash-pits.

Mrs. Morel was not anxious to move into the Bottoms, which was already twelve years old and on the downward path, when she descended to it from Bestwood. But it was the best she could do. Moreover, she had an end house in one of the top blocks, and thus had only one neighbour; on the other side an extra strip of garden. And, having an end house, she enjoyed a kind of aristocracy among the other women of the "between" houses, because her rent was five shillings and sixpence instead of five shillings a week. But this superiority in station was not much consolation to Mrs. Morel.

She was thirty-one years old, and had been married eight years. A rather small woman, of delicate mould but resolute bearing, she shrank a little from the first contact with the Bottoms women. She came down in the July, and in the September expected her third baby.

Her husband was a miner. They had only been in their new home three weeks when the wakes, or fair, began. Morel, she knew, was sure to make a holiday of it. He went off early on the Monday morning, day of the fair. The two children were highly excited. William, a boy of seven, fled off immediately after breakfast, to prowl round the wakes ground, leaving Annie, who was only five, to whine all morning to go also. Mrs. Morel did her work. She scarcely knew her neighbours yet, and knew no one with whom to trust the little girl. So she promised to take her to the wakes after dinner.

William appeared at half-past twelve. He was a very active lad, fair-haired, with a touch of the Dane or Norwegian about him.

"Can I have my dinner, mother?" he cried, rushing in with his cap on. "'Cause it begins at half-past one, the sign says so."

"You can have your dinner as soon as it's done," retorted the mother.

"Is n't it done?" he cried, his blue eyes staring at him in indignation. "Then I'm goin' be-out it."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. It will be done in five minutes. It is only half-past twelve."

"They'll be beginnin'," the boy half cried, half shouted.

"You won't die if they do," said the mother. "Besides, it's only half-past twelve, so you've a full hour."

The lad began hastily to lay the table, and directly the three sat down. They were eating batter-pudding and jam, when the boy jumped off his chair and stood perfectly still. Some distance away could be heard the first small braying of a merry-go-round, and the tooting of a horn. His face quivered as he looked at his mother.

"I told you!" he said, running to the dresser for his cap.

"Take your pudding in your hand — and it's only five past one, so you were wrong — you have n't got you twopence," cried the mother in a breath.

The boy came back, bitterly disappointed, for his twopence; then went off without a word.

"I want to go, I want to go," said Annie, beginning to cry.

"Well, and you shall go, whining, wizzening! little stick!" said the mother. And later in the afternoon she trudged up the hill under the tall hedge with her child. The hay was gathered from the fields, and cattle were turned on to the eddish. It was warm, peaceful.

Mrs. Morel did not like the wakes. There were two sets of horses, one going by steam, one pulled round by a pony; three organs were grinding, and there came out cracks of pistol-shots, fearful screeching of the cocoanut man's rattle, shouts of the Aunt Sally man, screeches from the peep-show lady. The mother perceived her son gazing enraptured outside the Lion Wallace booth, at the pictures of this famous lion that had killed a negro and maimed for life two white men. She left him alone, went to get Annie a spin of toffee. Presently the boy stood in front of her, wildly excited.

"You never said you was coming — is n't the' a lot of things? — that lion's killed three men — I've spent my tuppence — an' look here."

He pulled from his pocket two egg-cups, with pink moss-toses on them.

"I got these from that stall where y'ave ter get them marbles in them holes. An' I got these two in two goes — 'aepenny a go — they've got moss-roses on, look here. I wanted these."

She knew he wanted them for her.

"H'm!" she said, pleased. "They *are* pretty!"

"Shall you carry 'em, 'cause I'm frightened o' breakin' 'em?"

He was tipful of excitement now she had come, led her about the ground, showed her everything. Then, at the peep-show, she explained the pictures, in a sort of story, to which he listened as if spellbound. He would not leave her. All the time he stuck close to her, bristling with a small boy's pride of her. For no other woman looked such a lady as she did, in her little black bonnet and her cloak. She smiled when she saw women she knew. When she was tired she said to her son:

"Well, are you coming now, or later?"

"Are you goin' a'ready?" he cried, his face full of reproach.

"Already? It is past four, I know."

"What are you goin' a'ready for?" he lamented.

"You need n't come if you don't want," she said.

And she went slowly away with her little girl, whilst her son stood watching her, cut to the heart to let her go, and yet unable to leave the wakes. As she crossed the open ground in front of the Moon and Stars she heard men shouting, and smelled the beer, and hurried a little, thinking her husband was probably in the bar.

At about half-past six her son came home, tired now, rather pale, and somewhat wretched. He was miserable, though he did not know it, because he had let her go. *Since she had gone, he had not enjoyed his wake*

"Has my dad been?" he asked.

"No," said the mother.

"He's helping to wait at the Moon and Stars. I him through that black tin stuff wi' holes in, on the dow, wi' his sleeves rolled up."

"Ha!" exclaimed the mother shortly. "He's go money. An' he'll be satisfied if he gets his 'lawa whether they give him more or not."

When the light was fading, and Mrs. Morel could see more to sew, she rose and went to the door. Everywhere was the sound of excitement, the restlessness of the day, that at last infected her. She went out into the garden. Women were coming home from the wakes, children hugging a white lamb with green legs, or a wooden horse. Occasionally a man lurched past, almost as as he could carry. Sometimes a good husband came a with his family, peacefully. But usually the women children were alone. The stay-at-home mothers stood sipping at the corners of the alley, as the twilight folded their arms under their white aprons.

Mrs. Morel was alone, but she was used to it. Her son and her little girl slept upstairs; so, it seemed, home was there behind her, fixed and stable. But she wretched with the coming child. The world seemed dreary place, where nothing else would happen for her at least until William grew up. But for herself, not but this dreary endurance — till the children grew. And the children! She could not afford to have this! She did not want it. The father was serving beer in public-house, swilling himself drunk. She despised and was tied to him. This coming child was too much for her. If it were not for William and Annie, she was sick of it, the struggle with poverty and ugliness and meanness.

She went into the front garden, feeling too heavy to take herself out, yet unable to stay indoors. The air suffocated her. And looking ahead, the prospect of life made her feel as if she were buried alive.

The front garden was a small square with a privet hedge. There she stood, trying to soothe herself with the scent of flowers and the fading, beautiful evening. Opposite her small gate was the stile that led uphill, under the tall hedge, between the burning glow of the cut pastures. The sky overhead throbbed and pulsed with light. The glow sank quickly off the field; the earth and the hedges smoked dusk. As it grew dark, a ruddy glare came out on the hilltop, and out of the glare the diminished commotion of the fair.

Sometimes, down the trough of darkness formed by the path under the hedges, men came lurching home. One young man lapsed into a run down the steep bit that ended the hill, and went with a crash into the stile. Mrs. Morel shuddered. He picked himself up, swearing viciously, rather pathetically, as if he thought the stile had wanted to hurt him.

She went indoors, wondering if things were never going to alter. She was beginning by now to realize that they would not. She seemed so far away from her girlhood, she wondered if it were the same person walking heavily up the back garden at the Bottoms as had run so lightly on the breakwater at Sheerness ten years before.

"What have *I* to do with it?" she said to herself. "What have *I* to do with all this? Even the child *I* am going to have! It does n't seem as if *I* were taken into account."

Sometimes life takes hold of one, carries the body along, accomplishes one's history, and yet is not real, but leaves oneself as it were slurred over.

"I wait," Mrs. Morel said to herself — "I wait, and what I wait for can never come."

Then she straightened the kitchen, lit the lamp, mended the fire, looked out the washing for the next day, and it to soak. After which she sat down to her sewing.ough the long hours her needle flashed regularly ugh the stuff. Occasionally she sighed, moving to ve herself. And all the time she was thinking ho

to make the most of what she had, for the childr sakes.

At half-past eleven her husband came. His cheeks v very red and very shiny above his black moustache. head nodded slightly. He was pleased with himself.

"Oh! Oh! waitin' for me, lass? I've bin 'elpin' thony, an' what's think he's gen me? Nowt b'r a lo hae'fcrown, an' that's ivry penny — "

"He thinks you've made the rest up in beer," she shortly.

"An' I 'ave n't — that I 'ave n't. You b'lieve me, I 'ad very little this day, I have an' all." His voice v tender. "Here, an' I browt thee a bit o' brandysnap, a cocoanut for th' children." He laid the gingerbi and the cocoanut, a hairy object, on the table. "N tha niver said thankyer for nowt i' thy life, did ter?"

As a compromise, she picked up the cocoanut and sh it, to see if it had any milk.

"It's a good 'un, you may back yer life o' that got it fra' Bill Hodgkisson. 'Bill,' I says, 'that wants them three nuts, does ter? Arena ter for gi me one for my bit of a lad an' wench?' 'I ham, V ter, my lad,' 'e says; 'ta'e which on 'em ter's a mi An' so I took one, an' thanked 'im. I did n't like shake it afore 'is eyes, but 'e says, 'Tha'd better i sure it's a good un, Walt.' An' so, yer see, I knowe was. He's a nice chap, is Bill Hodgkisson, 'e's a chap!"

"A man will part with anything so long as he's dru and you're drunk along with him," said Mrs. Morel.

"Eh, tha mucky little 'ussy, who's drunk, I sh'd ter know?" said Morel. He was extraordinarily ple with himself, because of his day's helping to wait in Moon and Stars. He chattered on.

Mrs. Morel, very tired, and sick of his babble, wen bed as quickly as possible, while he raked the fire.

*Mrs. Morel came of a good old burgher family, fam independents who had fought with Colonel Hutchins*

and who remained stout Congregationalists. Her grandfather had gone bankrupt in the lace-market at a time when so many lace-manufacturers were ruined in Nottingham. Her father, George Coppard, was an engineer — a large, handsome, haughty man, proud of his fair skin and blue eyes, but more proud still of his integrity. Gertrude resembled her mother in her small build. But her temper, proud and unyielding, she had from the Coppards.

George Coppard was bitterly galled by his own poverty. He became foreman of the engineers in the dock-yard at Sheerness. Mrs. Morel — Gertrude — was the second daughter. She favoured her mother, loved her mother best of all; but she had the Coppards' clear, defiant blue eyes and their broad brow. She remembered to have hated her father's overbearing manner towards her gentle, humorous, kindly-souled mother. She remembered running over the breakwater at Sheerness and finding the boat. She remembered to have been petted and flattered by all the men when she had gone to the dockyard, for she was a delicate, rather proud child. She remembered the funny old mistress, whose assistant she had become, whom she had loved to help in the private school. And she still had the Bible that John Field had given her. She used to walk home from chapel with John Field when she was nineteen. He was the son of a well-to-do tradesman, had been to college in London, and was to devote himself to business.

She could always recall in detail a September Sunday afternoon, when they had sat under the vine at the back of her father's house. The sun came through the chinks in the vine-leaves and made beautiful patterns, like a lace scarf, falling on her and on him. Some of the leaves were clean yellow, like yellow flat flowers.

"Now sit still," he had cried. "Now your hair, I don't know what it *is* like! It's as bright as copper and gold, red as burnt copper, and it has gold threads where the *i* shines on it. Fancy their saying it's brown. Your *ther* calls it mouse-colour."

She had met his brilliant eyes, but her clear face scarcely showed the elation which rose within her.

"But you say you don't like business," she pursued.

"I don't. I hate it!" he cried hotly.

"And you would like to go into the ministry," she half implored.

"I should. I should love it, if I thought I could make a first-rate preacher."

"Then why don't you — why *don't* you?" Her voice rang with defiance. "If *I* were a man, nothing would stop me."

She held her head erect. He was rather timid before her.

"But my father's so stiff-necked. He means to put me into the business, and I know he'll do it."

"But if you're a *man*?" she had cried.

"Being a man is n't everything," he replied, frowning with puzzled helplessness.

Now, as she moved about her work at the Bottoms, with some experience of what being a man meant, she knew that it was *not* everything.

At twenty, owing to her health, she had left Sheerness. Her father had retired home to Nottingham. John Field's father had been ruined; the son had gone as a teacher in Norwood. She did not hear of him until, two years later, she made determined inquiry. He had married his landlady, a woman of forty, a widow with property.

And still Mrs. Morel preserved John Field's Bible. She did not now believe him to be — Well, she understood pretty well what he might or might not have been. So she preserved his Bible, and kept his memory intact in her heart, for her own sake. To her dying day, for thirty-five years, she did not speak of him.

When she was twenty-three years old, she met, at a Christmas party, a young man from the Erewash Valley. Morel was then twenty-seven years old. He was well set up, erect, and very smart. He had wavy black hair that

one again, and a vigorous black beard that had never been shaved. His cheeks were ruddy, and his red, moist mirth was noticeable because he laughed so often and so artily. He had that rare thing, a rich, ringing laugh. Gertrude Coppard had watched him, fascinated. He was full of colour and animation, his voice ran so easily to comic grotesque, he was so ready and so pleasant to everybody. Her own father had a rich fund of mirth, but it was satiric. This man's was different: soft, non-intellectual, warm, a kind of gamboling.

She herself was opposite. She had a curious, receptive mind, which found much pleasure and amusement in listening to other folk. She was clever in leading folk on talk. She loved ideas, and was considered very intellectual. What she liked most of all was an argument on religion or philosophy or politics with some educated man. This she did not often enjoy. So she always had people tell her about themselves, finding her pleasure so.

In her person she was rather small and delicate, with large brow, and dropping bunches of brown silk curls. Her blue eyes were very straight, honest, and searching. She had the beautiful hands of the Coppards. Her dress was always subdued. She wore dark blue silk, with a peculiar silver chain of silver scallops. This, and a tiny brooch of twisted gold, was her only ornament. She was still perfectly intact, deeply religious, and full of beautiful candour.

Walter Morel seemed melted away before her. She was the miner that thing of mystery and fascination, a lady. When she spoke to him, it was with a southern pronunciation and a purity of English which thrilled him to hear. She watched him. He danced well, as if it were natural and joyous in him to dance. His grandfather was French refugee who had married an English barmaid — it had been a marriage. Gertrude Coppard watched the young miner as he danced, a certain subtle exultation like a glamour in his movement, and his face the flower of his body, ruddy, with tumbled black hair, and laughing alike

whatever partner he bowed above. She thought him rather wonderful, never having met anyone like him. Her father was to her the type of all men. And George Coppard, proud in his bearing, handsome, and rather bitter; who preferred theology in reading, and who drew near in sympathy only to one man, the Apostle Paul; who was harsh in government, and in familiarity ironic; who ignored all sensuous pleasure; — he was very different from the miner. Gertrude herself was rather contemptuous of dancing; she had not the slightest inclination towards that accomplishment, and had never learned even a Roger de Coverley. She was a puritan, like her father, high-minded, and really stern. Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensuous flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her.

He came and bowed above her. A warmth radiated through her as if she had drunk wine.

"Now do come and have this one wi' me," he said caressively. "It's easy, you know. I'm pining to see you dance."

She had told him before she could not dance. She glanced at his humility and smiled. Her smile was very beautiful. It moved the man so that he forgot everything.

"No, I won't dance," she said softly. Her words came clean and ringing.

Not knowing what he was doing — he often did the right thing by instinct — he sat beside her, inclining reverentially.

"But you must n't miss your dance," she reproved.

"Nay, I don't want to dance that — it's not one as I care about."

"Yet you invited me to it."

He laughed very heartily at this.

"I never thought o' that. Tha 'rt not long in takin' the curl out of me."

*It was her turn to laugh quickly.*

You don't look as if you'd come much uncurled," she

I'm like a pig's tail, I curl because I canna help it,"  
tughed, rather boisterously.

And you are a miner!" she exclaimed in surprise.

Yes. I went down when I was ten."

he looked at him in wondering dismay.

When you were ten! And was n't it very hard?" she  
d.

You soon get used to it. You live like th' mice, an'  
pop out at night to see what's going on."

It makes me feel blind," she frowned.

Like a moudiwarf!" he laughed. "Yi, an' there's  
e chaps as does go round like moudiwarps." He  
st his face forward in the blind, snout-like way of a  
, seeming to sniff and peer for direction. "They dun  
igh!" he protested naively. "Tha niver seed such a  
they get in. But tha mun let me ta'e thee down some  
, an' tha can see for thySEN."

he looked at him, startled. This was a new tract of  
suddenly opened before her. She realized the life of  
miners, hundreds of them toiling below earth and com-  
up at evening. He seemed to her noble. He risked  
life daily, and with gaiety. She looked at him, with  
uch of appeal in her pure humility.

Should n't ter like it?" he asked tenderly. "'Appen  
it 'ud dirty thee."

he had never been "thee'd" and "thou'd" before.

The next Christmas they were married, and for three  
ths she was perfectly happy: for six months she was  
y happy.

He had signed the pledge, and wore the blue ribbon of  
etotaller: he was nothing if not showy. They lived,  
thought, in his own house. It was small, but con-  
ient enough, and quite nicely furnished, with solid,  
thy stuff that suited her honest soul. The women,  
neighbours, were rather foreign to her, and Morel's  
her and sisters were apt to sneer at her ladylike ways

But she could perfectly well live by herself, so long as she had her husband close.

Sometimes, when she herself wearied of love-talk, she tried to open her heart seriously to him. She saw him listen deferentially, but without understanding. This killed her efforts at a finer intimacy, and she had flashes of fear. Sometimes he was restless of an evening: it was not enough for him just to be near her, she realized. She was glad when he set himself to little jobs.

He was a remarkably handy man — could make or mend anything. So she would say:

"I do like that coal-rake of your mother's — it's small and natty."

"Does ter, my wench? Well, I made that, so I can make thee one."

"What! why it's a steel one!"

"An' what if it is! Tha s'll ha'e one very similar, not exactly same."

She did not mind the mess, nor the hammering and noise. He was busy and happy.

But in the seventh month, when she was brushing his Sunday coat, she felt papers in the breast-pocket, and seized with a sudden curiosity, took them out to read. He very rarely wore the frock-coat he was married in: and it had not occurred to her before to feel curious concerning the papers. They were the bills of the household furniture, still unpaid.

"Look here," she said at night, after he was washed and had had his dinner. "I found these in the pocket of your wedding-coat. Have n't you settled the bills yet?"

"No, I have n't had a chance."

"But you told me all was paid. I had better go in to Nottingham on Saturday and settle them. I don't like sitting on another man's chairs and eating from an unpayable table."

He did not answer.

"I can have your bank-book, can't I?"

"Tha can ha'e it, for what good it'll be to thee."

"I thought —" she began. He had told her he had a good bit of money left over. But she realized it was no use asking questions. She sat rigid with bitterness and indignation.

The next day she went down to see his mother.

"Did n't you buy the furniture for Walter?" she asked.

"Yes, I did," tartly retorted the elder woman.

"And how much did he give you to pay for it?"

The elder woman was stung with fine indignation.

"Eighty pound, if you're so keen on knowin'," she replied.

"Eighty pounds! But there are forty-two pounds still owing!"

"I can't help that."

"But where has it all gone?"

"You'll find all the papers, I think, if you look — beside ten pound as he owed me, an' six pound as the wedding cost down here."

"Six pounds!" echoed Gertrude Morel. It seemed to her monstrous that, after her own father had paid so heavily for her wedding, six pounds more should have been squandered in eating and drinking at Walter's parents' house, at his expense.

"And how much has he sunk in his houses?" she asked.

"His houses — which houses?"

Gertrude Morel went white to the lips. He had told her the house he lived in, and the next one, were his own.

"I thought the house we live in —" she began.

"They're my houses, those two," said the mother-in-law. "And not clear either. It's as much as I can do to keep the mortgage interest paid."

Gertrude sat white and silent. She was her father now.

"Then we ought to be paying you rent," she said coldly.

"Walter is paying me rent," replied the mother.

"And what rent?" asked Gertrude.

"Six-and-six a week," retorted the mother.

It was more than the house was worth. Gertrude held her head erect, looked straight before her.

"It is lucky to be you," said the elder woman, biting "to have a husband as takes all the worry of the money and leaves you a free hand."

The young wife was silent.

She said very little to her husband, but her manner had changed towards him. Something in her proud, honourable soul had crystallized out hard as rock.

When October came in, she thought only of Christmas. Two years ago, at Christmas, she had met him. Last Christmas she had married him. This Christmas she would bear him a child.

"You don't dance yourself, do you, missis?" asked Mrs. Morel's nearest neighbour, in October, when there was great talk of opening a dancing-class over the Brick and Tile Inn, Bestwood.

"No—I never had the least inclination to," Mrs. Morel replied.

"Fancy! An' how funny as you should ha' married your Mester. You know he's quite a famous one at dancing."

"I did n't know he was famous," laughed Mrs. Morel.

"Yea, he is though! Why, he run that dancing-class in the Miners' Arms club-room for over five years."

"Did he?"

"Yes, he did." The other woman was defiant. "It was thronged every Tuesday, and Thursday, an' Saturday—an' there was carryin'-on, accordin' to all accounts."

This kind of thing was gall and bitterness to Mrs. Morel, and she had a fair share of it. The women did not spare her, at first; for she was superior, though she could not help it.

He began to be rather late in coming home.

"They're working very late now, are n't they?" said to her washer-woman.

"No later than they allers do, I don't think. But th-

p to have their pint at Ellen's, an' they get talkin', an' re you are! Dinner stone cold — an' it serves 'em ht."

"But Mr. Morel does not take any drink."

The woman dropped the clothes, looked at Mrs. Morel, n went on with her work, saying nothing.

Gertrude Morel was very ill when the boy was bor t  
rel was good to her, as good as gold. But she f ad y lonely, miles away from her own people. She f r, ely with him now, and his presence only made it mor ence.

The boy was small and frail at first, but he came on ckly. He was a beautiful child, with dark gold ring s, and dark-blue eyes which changed gradually to a ar grey. His mother loved him passionately. He ne just when her own bitterness of disillusion was rdest to bear; when her faith in life was shaken, and soul felt dreary and lonely. She made much of the ld, and the father was jealous.

At last Mrs. Morel despised her husband. She turned the child; she turned from the father. He had begun neglect her; the novelty of his own home was gone. had no grit, she said bitterly to herself. What he felt t at the minute, that was all to him. He could not de by anything. There was nothing at the back of his show.

There began a battle between the husband and wife — earful, bloody battle that ended only with the death of e. She fought to make him undertake his own responsi lities, to make him fulfil his obligations. But he was too ferent from her. His nature was purely sensuous, and strove to make him moral, religious. She tried to ce him to face things. He could not endure it — it ove him out of his mind.

While the baby was still tiny, the father's temper had come so irritable that it was not to be trusted. The ld had only to give a little trouble when the man began bully. A little more, and the hard hands of the collier

hit the baby. Then Mrs. Morel loathed her husband, loathed him for days; and he went out and drank; and she cared very little what he did. Only, on his return, she scath'd him with her satire.

The estrangement between them caused him, knowingly or unknowingly, grossly to offend her where he would not have done.

William was only one year old, and his mother was ch'oud of him, he was so pretty. She was not well off now, but her sisters kept the boy in clothes. Then, with his little white hat curled with an ostrich feather, and his white coat, he was a joy to her, the twining wisps of hair clustering round his head. Mrs. Morel lay listening, one Sunday morning, to the chatter of the father and child downstairs. Then she dozed off. When she came downstairs, a great fire glowed in the grate, the room was hot, the breakfast was roughly laid, and seated in his arm-chair, against the chimney-piece, sat Morel, rather timid; and standing between his legs, the child — cropped like a sheep, with such an odd round poll — looking wondering at her; and on a newspaper spread out upon the hearthrug, a myriad of crescent-shaped curls, like the petals of a marigold scattered in the reddening firelight.

Mrs. Morel stood still. It was her first baby. She went very white, and was unable to speak.

"What dost think o' 'im?" Morel laughed uneasily.

She gripped her two fists, lifted them, and came forward. Morel shrank back.

"I could kill you, I could!" she said. She choked with rage, her two fists uplifted.

"Yer non want ter make a wench on 'im," Morel said, in a frightened tone, bending his head to shield his eyes from hers. His attempt at laughter had vanished.

The mother looked down at the jagged, close-clipped head of her child. She put her hands on his hair, and stroked and fondled his head.

"Oh — my boy!" she faltered. Her lip trembled, her face broke, and, snatching up the child, she buried her face

oulder and cried painfully. She was one of those who cannot cry; whom it hurts as it hurts a man. She ripping something out of her, her sobbing.

sat with his elbows on his knees, his hands together till the knuckles were white. He gazed there, feeling almost stunned, as if he could not

tly she came to an end, soothed the child and away the breakfast-table. She left the newspaper, with curls, spread upon the hearthrug. At last and gathered it up and put it at the back of the e went about her work with closed mouth, and t. Morel was subdued. He crept about wretchedly. His meals were a misery that day. She spoke civilly, and never alluded to what he had done. It something final had happened.

ards she said she had been silly, that the boy's id have had to be cut, sooner or later. In the even brought herself to say to her husband it was well he had played barber when he did. But she Morel knew, that that act had caused something us to take place in her soul. She remembered all her life, as one in which she had suffered intensely.

ct of masculine clumsiness was the spear through of her love for Morel. Before, while she had against him bitterly, she had fretted after him, as gone astray from her. Now she ceased to fret over: he was an outsider to her. This made life re bearable.

heless, she still continued to strive with him. She her high moral sense, inherited from generations ns. It was now a religious instinct, and she was fanatic with him, because she loved him, or had to. If he sinned, she tortured him. If he drank, was often a poltroon, sometimes a knave, she he lash unmercifully.

*It was, she was too much his opposite.*

could not be content with the little he might be; she have him the much that he ought to be. So, in so to make him nobler than he could be, she destroyed. She injured and hurt and scarred herself, but she lost of her worth. She also had the children.

He drank rather heavily, though not more than miners, and always beer, so that whilst his health affected, it was never injured. The week-end was his carouse. He sat in the Miners' Arms until turning time every Friday, every Saturday, and every Sunday evening. On Monday and Tuesday he had to get up reluctantly leave towards ten o'clock. Sometimes stayed at home on Wednesday and Thursday evenings or was only out for an hour. He practically never miss work owing to his drinking.

But although he was very steady at work, his fell off. He was blab-mouthed, a tongue-wagger. Authority was hateful to him, therefore he could only the pit-managers. He would say, in the Palmerston

"Th' gaffer come down to our stall this morning, says, 'You know, Walter, this 'ere 'll not do. What these props?' An' I says to him, 'Why, what art thou about? What dost mean about th' props?' 'It 'll do, this 'ere,' 'e says. 'You 'll be havin' th' roof in o' these days.' An' I says, 'Tha 'd better stan' on o' clunch, then, an' hold it up wi' thy 'ead.' So 't that mad, 'e cussed an' 'e swore, an' t' other chaps did laugh." Morel was a good mimic. He imitated manager's fat, squeaky voice, with its attempt at English.

"'I shan't have it, Walter. Who knows more about me or you?' So I says, 'I've niver fun out how tha' knows, Alfred. It 'll 'appen carry thee ter be back.'

So Morel would go on to the amusement of his companions. And some of this would be true. The manager was not an educated man. He had been along with Morel, so that, while the two disliked

er, they more or less took each other for granted.

Alfred Charlesworth did not forgive the butty these  
lic-house sayings. Consequently, although Morel was  
good miner, sometimes earning as much as five pounds  
a week when he married, he came gradually to have worse  
and worse stalls, where the coal was thin, and hard to get,  
unprofitable.

Also, in summer, the pits are slack. Often, on bright  
mornings, the men are seen trooping home again  
at ten, eleven, or twelve o'clock. No empty trucks stand  
at the pit-mouth. The women on the hillside look across  
and shake the hearthrug against the fence, and count  
the waggons the engine is taking along the line up the  
valley. And the children, as they come from school at  
inter-time, looking down the fields and seeing the wheels  
of the headstocks standing, say:

"Minton's knocked off. My dad'll be at home."

And there is a sort of shadow over all, women and  
children and men, because money will be short at the end  
of the week.

Morel was supposed to give his wife thirty shillings  
a week, to provide everything — rent, food, clothes, clubs,  
trance, doctors. Occasionally, if he were flush, he  
gave her thirty-five. But these occasions by no means  
occurred those when he gave her twenty-five. In winter,  
in a decent stall, the miner might earn fifty or fifty-  
shillings a week. Then he was happy. On Friday  
night, Saturday, and Sunday, he spent royally, getting  
out of his sovereign or thereabouts. And out of so much,  
he scarcely spared the children an extra penny or bought  
them a pound of apples. It all went in drink. In the  
old times, matters were more worrying, but he was not so  
often drunk, so that Mrs. Morel used to say:

"I'm not sure I would n't rather be short, for when  
he's flush, there is n't a minute of peace."

If he earned forty shillings he kept ten; from thirty-  
two he kept five; from thirty-two he kept four; from  
thirty-eight he kept three; from twenty-four he kept

two; from twenty he kept one-and-six; from eighteen he kept a shilling; from sixteen he kept sixpence. He never saved a penny, and he gave his wife no opportunity of saving; instead, she had occasionally to pay his debts; not public-house debts, for those never were passed on to the women, but debts when he had bought a canary, or a fancy walking-stick.

At the wakes time, Morel was working badly, and Mrs. Morel was trying to save against her confinement. So it galled her bitterly to think he should be out taking his pleasure and spending money, whilst she remained at home, harassed. There were two days holiday. On the Tuesday morning Morel rose early. He was in good spirits. Quite early, before six o'clock, she heard him whistling away to himself downstairs. He had a pleasant way of whistling, lively and musical. He nearly always whistled hymns. He had been a choir-boy with a beautiful voice, and had taken solos in Southwell cathedral. His morning whistling alone betrayed it.

His wife lay listening to him tinkering away in the garden, his whistling ringing out as he sawed and hammered away. It always gave her a sense of warmth and peace to hear him thus as she lay in bed, the children not yet awake, in the bright early morning, happy in his man's fashion.

At nine o'clock, while the children with bare legs and feet were sitting playing on the sofa, and the mother was washing up, he came in from his carpentry, his sleeves rolled up, his waistcoat hanging open. He was still a good-looking man, with black, wavy hair, and a large black moustache. His face was perhaps too much inflamed, and there was about him a look almost of peevishness. But now he was jolly. He went straight to the sink where his wife was washing up.

"What, are thee there!" he said boisterously. "Sluther off an' let me wesh mysen."

"*You may wait till I've finished,*" said his wife.  
"Oh, mun I? An' what if I shonna?"

This good-humoured threat amused Mrs. Morel.

"Then you can go and wash yourself in the soft-water  
"

Ha! I can an' a', tha mucky little 'ussy."

With which he stood watching her a moment, then went  
to wait for her.

When he chose he could still make himself again a real  
ant. Usually he preferred to go out with a scarf  
nd his neck. Now, however, he made a toilet. There  
ned so much gusto in the way he puffed and swilled  
he washed himself, so much alacrity with which he hurried  
to the mirror in the kitchen, and, bending because it  
was too low for him, scrupulously parted his wet black  
hair, that it irritated Mrs. Morel. He put on a turn-  
in collar, a black bow, and wore his Sunday tail-coat.  
such, he looked spruce, and what his clothes would  
do, his instinct for making the most of his good looks  
told.

At half-past nine Jerry Purdy came to call for his pal.  
Jerry was Morel's bosom friend, and Mrs. Morel disliked  
him. He was a tall, thin man, with a rather foxy face,  
kind of face that seems to lack eyelashes. He walked  
with a stiff, brittle dignity, as if his head were on a wooden  
peg. His nature was cold and shrewd. Generous where  
he intended to be generous, he seemed to be very fond of  
Morel, and more or less to take charge of him.

Mrs. Morel hated him. She had known his wife, who  
died of consumption, and who had, at the end, con-  
tracted such a violent dislike of her husband, that if he  
had entered into her room it caused her hemorrhage. None of  
the Jerry had seemed to mind. And now his eldest  
daughter, a girl of fifteen, kept a poor house for him, and  
looked after the two younger children.

"A mean, wizzen-hearted stick!" Mrs. Morel said of

"I've never known Jerry mean in *my* life," protested  
Morel. "A opener-handed and more freer chap you  
don't find anywhere, accordin' to my knowledge."

"Open-handed to you," retorted Mrs. Morel. "But his fist is shut tight enough to his children, poor things."

"Poor things! And what for are they poor things, should like to know?"

But Mrs. Morel would not be appeased on Jerry's score.

The subject of argument was seen, craning his thin neck over the scullery curtain. He caught Mrs. Morel's eye.

"Mornin', missis! Mester in?"

"Yes — he is."

Jerry entered unasked, and stood by the kitchen way. He was not invited to sit down, but stood coolly asserting the rights of men and husbands.

"A nice day," he said to Mrs. Morel.

"Yes."

"Grand out this morning — grand for a w—

"Do you mean *you're* going for a walk?"

"Yes. We mean walkin' to Nottingham," he .

"H'm!"

The two men greeted each other, both glad: Jerry, however, full of assurance, Morel rather subdued, afraid to seem too jubilant in presence of his wife. But he lace his boots quickly, with spirit. They were going for a ten mile walk across the fields to Nottingham. Climbing the hillside from the Bottoms, they mounted gaily into the morning. At the Moon and Stars they had their first drink, then on to the Old Spot. Then a long five miles of drought to carry them into Bulwell to a glorious pint of bitter. But they stayed in a field with some haymaker whose gallon bottle was full, so that, when they came in sight of the city, Morel was sleepy. The town spread upwards before them, smoking vaguely in the midday glare, fridging the crest away to the south with spires and factory bulks and chimneys. In the last field Morel lay down under an oak-tree and slept soundly for over an hour. When he arose to go forward he felt queer.

The two had dinner in the Meadows, with Jerry. Then repaired to the Punch Bowl, where they mixing the excitement of pigeon-racing. Morel never in his ~~avily~~ dayed cards, considering them as having some occult, malevolent power — “the devil’s pictures,” he called them! But he was a master of skittles and of dominoes. He took a challenge from a Newark man, on skittles. All the men in the old, long bar took sides, betting either one way or the other. Morel took off his coat. Jerry held the hat containing the money. The men at the tables betched. Some stood with their mugs in their hands. Morel felt his big wooden ball carefully, then launched it. He played havoc among the nine-pins, and won half-crown, which restored him to solvency.

By seven o’clock the two were in good condition. They caught the 7.30 train home.

In the afternoon the Bottoms was intolerable. Every inhabitant remaining was out of doors. The women, in twos and threes, bareheaded and in white aprons, gossiped in the alley between the blocks. Men, having a rest between drinks, sat on their heels and talked. The place smelt stale; the slate roofs glistened in the arid heat.

Mrs. Morel took the little girl down to the brook in the meadows, which were not more than two hundred yards away. The water ran quickly over stones and broken pots. Mother and child leaned on the rail of the old steep-bridge, watching. Up at the dipping-hole, at the other end of the meadow, Mrs. Morel could see the naked forms of boys flashing round the deep yellow water, or an occasional bright figure dart glittering over the blackish stagnant meadow. She knew William was at the dipping-hole, and it was the dread of her life lest he should get drowned. Annie played under the tall old hedge, ng up alder cones, that she called currants. The required much attention, and the flies were teasing. The children were put to bed at seven o’clock. They ~~went~~ ked awhile.

## *Sons and Lovers*

"Open-handed," after Morel and Jerry arrived at Bestwood, his fist is off a load off their minds; a railway journey things" impended, so they could put the finishing touch "to a glorious day. They entered the Nelson with satisfaction of returned travellers.

The next day was a work-day, and the thought of put a damper on the men's spirits. Most of them, moreover, had spent their money. Some were already rolling dismally home, to sleep in preparation for the morrow. Mrs. Morel, listening to their mournful singing, went indoors. Nine o'clock passed, and ten, and still "the pair" had not returned. On a doorstep somewhere man was singing loudly, in a drawl, "Lead, kindly Light." Mrs. Morel was always indignant with the drunken men that they must sing that hymn when they got maudlin.

"As if 'Genevieve' were n't good enough," she said.

The kitchen was full of the scent of boiled herbs and hops. On the hob a large black saucepan steamed slowly. Mrs. Morel took a panchion, a great bowl of thick red earth, strewed a heap of white sugar into the bottom, and, then, straining herself to the weight, was pouring the liquor.

Just then Morel came in. He had been very jolly at the Nelson, but coming home had grown irritable. He had not quite got over the feeling of irritability and pain, after having slept on the ground when he was so hot; and a bad conscience afflicted him as he neared the house. I did not know he was angry. But when the garden-gate resisted his attempts to open it, he kicked it and broke the latch. He entered just as Mrs. Morel was pouring the infusion of herbs out of the saucepan. Swaying slightly, he lurched against the table. The boiling liquid pitched. Mrs. Morel started back.

"Good gracious," she cried, "coming home in drunkenness!"

"Comin' home in his what?" he snarled, his hat off his eye.

*Suddenly her blood rose in a jet.*

Say you 're *not* drunk!" she flashed.

he had put down her saucepan, and was stirring the  
ur into the beer. He dropped his two hands heavily  
the table, and thrust his face forward at her.

'Say you 're not drunk,'" he repeated. "Why, no-  
y but a nasty little bitch like you 'ud 'ave such a  
ight."

le thrust his face forward at her.

There 's money to bezzle with, if there 's money for  
ing else."

I 've not spent a two-shillin' bit this day," he said.

You don't get as drunk as a lord on nothing," she  
ied. "And," she cried, flashing into sudden fury, "if  
've been sponging on your beloved Jerry, why, let him  
after his children, for they need it."

It 's a lie, it 's a lie. Shut your face, woman."

hey were now at battle-pitch. Each forgot everything  
the hatred of the other and the battle between them.  
was fiery and furious as he. They went on till he  
d her a liar.

No," she cried, starting up, scarce able to breathe.  
on't call me that — you, the most despicable liar that  
walked in shoe-leather." She forced the last words  
of suffocated lungs.

You 're a liar!" he yelled, banging the table with his

"You 're a liar, you 're a liar."

he stiffened herself, with clenched fists.

The house is filthy with you," she cried.

Then get out on it — it 's mine. Get out on it!" he  
ted. "It 's me as brings th' money whoam, not thee.  
my house, not thine. Then ger out on't — ger out  
"

And I would," she cried, suddenly shaken into tears  
potence. "Ah, would n't I, would n't I have gone  
ago, but for those children. Ay, have n't I repented  
going years ago, when I 'd only the one" — suddenly  
ng into rage. "Do you think it 's for *you* I stop —  
e think I 'd stop one minute for *you*?"

"Go, then," he shouted, beside himself. "Go!"

"No!" she faced round. "No," she cried loudly, "you shan't have it *all* your own way; you shan't do *all* you like. I've got those children to see to. My word," laughed, "I should look well to leave them to you."

"Go," he cried thickly, lifting his fist. He was afraid of her. "Go!"

"I should be only too glad. I should laugh, laugh, lord, if I could get away from you," she replied.

He came up to her, his red face, with its bloodshot eyes thrust forward, and gripped her arms. She cried in fear of him, struggled to be free. Coming slightly to himself, panting, he pushed her roughly to the outer door, and thrust her forth, slotting the bolt behind her with a bang. Then he went back into the kitchen, dropped into his armchair, his head, bursting full of blood, sinking between his knees. Thus he dipped gradually into a stupor, from exhaustion and intoxication.

The moon was high and magnificent in the August night. Mrs. Morel, seared with passion, shivered to find herself out there in a great white light, that fell cold on her, and gave a shock to her inflamed soul. She stood for a few moments helplessly staring at the glistening great rhubarb leaves near the door. Then she got the air into her breath. She walked down the garden path, trembling in every limb, while the child boiled within her. For a while she could not control her consciousness; mechanically she went over the last scene, then over it again, certain phrases, certain moments coming each time like a brand red-hot down her soul; and each time she enacted again the past hours, each time the brand came down at the same points, the mark was burnt in, and the pain burnt out, and last she came to herself. She must have been half an hour in this delirious condition. Then the presence of night came again to her. She glanced round in fear. She had wandered to the side garden, where she was walking up and down the path beside the currant bushes under the long wall. The garden was a narrow strip, bounded

from the road, that cut transversely between the blocks, by a thick thorn hedge.

She hurried out of the side garden to the front, where she could stand as if in an immense gulf of white light, the moon streaming high in face of her, the moonlight standing up from the hills in front, and filling the valley where the Bottoms crouched, almost blindingly. There, panting and half weeping in reaction from the stress, she murmured to herself over and over again: "The nuisance! the nuisance!"

She became aware of something about her. With an effort she roused herself to see what it was that penetrated her consciousness. The tall white lilies were reeling in the moonlight, and the air was charged with their perfume, as with a presence. Mrs. Morel gasped slightly in fear. She touched the big, pallid flowers on their petals, then shivered. They seemed to be stretching in the moonlight. She put her hand into one white bin: the gold scarcely showed on her fingers by moonlight. She bent down to look at the binful of yellow pollen; but it only appeared dusky. Then she drank a deep draught of the scent. It almost made her dizzy.

Mrs. Morel leaned on the garden gate, looking out, and she lost herself awhile. She did not know what she thought. Except for a slight feeling of sickness, and her consciousness in the child, herself melted out like scent into the shiny, pale air. After a time the child, too, melted with her in the mixing-pot of moonlight, and she rested with the hills and lilies and houses, all swum together in a kind of swoon.

When she came to herself she was tired for sleep. Languidly she looked about her; the clumps of white phlox seemed like bushes spread with linen; a moth ricochetted over them, and right across the garden. Following it with her eye roused her. A few whiffs of the raw, strong scent of phlox invigorated her. She passed along the path, hesitating at the white rosebush. It smelled sweet and simple, : touched the white ruffles of the roses. Their fres-

scent and cool, soft leaves reminded her of the mornin time and sunshine. She was very fond of them. But s was tired, and wanted to sleep. In the mysterious out-o doors she felt forlorn.

There was no noise anywhere. Evidently the childr had not been wakened, or had gone to sleep again. train, three miles away, roared across the valley. T night was very large, and very strange, stretching i hoary distances infinitely. And out of the silver-grey f of darkness came sounds vague and hoarse: a cornera not far off, sound of a train like a sigh, and distant shou of men.

Her quietened heart beginning to beat quickly agai she hurried down the side garden to the back of the hous Softly she lifted the latch; the door was still bolted, sh hard against her. She rapped gently, waited, then rappe again. She must not rouse the children, nor the neigbours. He must be asleep, and he would not wake easil Her heart began to burn to be indoors. .She clung to th door-handle. Now it was cold; she would take a chill, ar in her present condition!

Putting her apron over her head and her arms, sh hurried again to the side garden, to the window of th kitchen. Leaning on the sill, she could just see, under th blind, her husband's arms spread out on the table, an his black head on the board. He was sleeping with h face lying on the table. Something in his attitude mad her feel tired of things. The lamp was burning smokily she could tell by the copper colour of the light. Si tapped at the window more and more noisily. Almost seemed as if the glass would break. Still he did not wal up.

After vain efforts, she began to shiver, partly from contact with the stone, and from exhaustion. Fearful alway for the unborn child, she wondered what she could do fo warmth. She went down to the coal-house, where was *a old hearthrug she had carried out for the rag-man the da before.* This she wrapped over her shoulders. It w

arm, if grimy. Then she walked up and down the garden path, peeping every now and then under the blind, knocking, and telling herself that in the end the very train of his position must wake him.

At last, after about an hour, she rapped long and low at the window. Gradually the sound penetrated to him. When, in despair, she had ceased to tap, she saw him stir, then lift his face blindly. The labouring of his heart sent him into consciousness. She rapped imperatively at the window. He started awake. Instantly she saw his teeth set and his eyes glare. He had not a grain of physical fear. If it had been twenty burglars, he would have gone blindly for them. He glared round, bewildered, but prepared to fight.

"Open the door, Walter," she said coldly.

His hands relaxed. It dawned on him what he had done. His head dropped, sullen and dogged. She saw him hurry to the door, heard the bolt chock. He tried the latch. It opened — and there stood the silver-grey night, fearful to him, after the tawny light of the lamp. He hurried back.

When Mrs. Morel entered, she saw him almost running through the door to the stairs. He had ripped his collar off his neck in his haste to be gone ere she came in, and here it lay with bursten button-holes. It made her angry.

She warmed and soothed herself. In her weariness forgetting everything, she moved about at the little tasks that remained to be done, set his breakfast, rinsed his pit-bottle, put his pit-clothes on the hearth to warm, set his pit-boots beside them, put him out a clean scarf and snap-bag and two apples, raked the fire, and went to bed. He was already dead asleep. His narrow black eyebrows were drawn up in a sort of peevish misery into his forehead, while his cheeks' downstrokes, and his sulky mouth, seemed to be saying: "I don't care who you are nor what you are, I shall have my own way."

Mrs. Morel knew him too well to look at him. As she

unfastened her brooch at the mirror, she smiled faintly  
see her face all smeared with the yellow dust of lilies. S  
brushed it off, and at last lay down. For some time h  
mind continued snapping and jetting sparks, but she w  
asleep before her husband awoke from the first sleep of l  
drunkenness.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BIRTH OF PAUL, AND ANOTHER BATTLE

TER such a scene as the last, Walter Morel was for  
ome days abashed and ashamed, but he soon re-  
l his old bullying indifference. Yet there was a  
shinking, a diminishing in his assurance. Phys-  
even, he shrank, and his fine full presence waned.  
ver grew in the least stout, so that, as he sank from  
ect, assertive bearing, his physique seemed to con-  
along with his pride and moral strength.

t now he realized how hard it was for his wife to  
about at her work, and, his sympathy quickened by  
nce, hastened forward with his help. He came  
ht home from the pit, and stayed in at evening till  
y, and then he could not remain at home. But he  
ack again by ten o'clock, almost quite sober.

always made his own breakfast. Being a man who  
early and had plenty of time he did not, as some  
s do, drag his wife out of bed at six o'clock. At  
ometimes earlier, he woke, got straight out of bed,  
ent downstairs. When she could not sleep, his wife  
aiting for this time, as for a period of peace. The  
real rest seemed to be when he was out of the house.  
went downstairs in his shirt and then struggled into  
t-trousers, which were left on the hearth to warm all

There was always a fire, because Mrs. Morel raked.  
he first sound in the house was the bang, bang of  
oker against the raker, as Morel smashed the re-  
er of the coal to make the kettle, which was filled  
ft on the hob, finally boil. His cup and knife and  
all he wanted except just the food, was laid ready  
*table on a newspaper.* Then he got his breakfast,

made the tea, packed the bottom of the doors with rugs to shut out the draught, piled a big fire, and sat down to an hour of joy. He toasted his bacon on a fork and caught the drops of fat on his bread; then he put the rasher on his thick slice of bread, and cut off chunks with a clasp-knife, poured his tea into his saucer, and was happy. With his family about, meals were never so pleasant. He loathed a fork; it is a modern introduction which has still scarcely reached common people. What Morel preferred was a clasp-knife. Then, in solitude, he ate and drank, often sitting, in cold weather, on a little stool with his back to the warm chimney-piece, his food on the fender, his cup on the hearth. And then he read the last night's newspaper — what of it he could — spelling it over laboriously. He preferred to keep the blinds down and the candle lit even when it was daylight; it was the habit of the mine.

At a quarter to six he rose, cut two thick slices of bread-and-butter, and put them in the white calico snap-bag. He filled his tin bottle with tea. Cold tea without milk or sugar was the drink he preferred for the pit. Then he pulled off his shirt, and put on his pit-singlet, a vest of thick flannel cut low round the neck, and with short sleeves like a chemise.

Then he went upstairs to his wife with a cup of tea because she was ill, and because it occurred to him.

"I've brought thee a cup o' tea, lass," he said.

"Well, you need n't, for you know I don't like it," she replied.

"Drink it up; -it'll pop thee off to sleep again."

She accepted the tea. It pleased him to see her take it and sip it.

"I'll back my life there's no sugar in," she said.

"Yi — there's one big un," he replied, injured.

"It's a wonder," she said, sipping again.

She had a winsome face when her hair was loose. *Loved her to grumble at him in this manner. He loved her again, and went, without any sort of leave-tak*

ook more than two slices of bread-and-butter to eat it, so an apple or an orange was a treat to him. Mrs. Morel liked it when she put one out for him. He tied a handkerchief round his neck, put on his great, heavy boots, his coat with the big pocket, that carried his snap-bag and a pocketful of tea, and went forth into the fresh morning air, without locking, the door behind him. He left the house early morning, and the walk across the fields. He appeared at the pit-top, often with a stalk from between his teeth, which he chewed all day to keep his mouth moist, down the mine, feeling quite as well as when he was in the field.

When the time for the baby grew nearer, he would be found in his slovenly fashion, poking out the ashes, sweeping the fireplace, sweeping the house before he went to bed. Then, feeling very self-righteous, he went up-

"I'm cleaned up for thee; tha's no 'casions ter be vexed all day, but sit and read thy books."

Mrs. Morel made her laugh, in spite of her indignation.

"Is the dinner cooks itself?" she answered.

"I know nowt about th' dinner."

"I'd know if there were n't any."

"Appen so," he answered, departing.

When she got downstairs, she would find the house tidy, Mrs. Morel said. She could not rest until she had thoroughly cleaned it; so she went down to the ash-pit with her dustpan. Mrs. Kirk, spying her, would contrive to have to go to her own coal-place at that minute. Then, across the garden fence, she would call:

"You keep wagging on, then?"

"Answered Mrs. Morel deprecatingly. "There's nothing else for it."

"Have you seen Hose?" called a very small woman across the road. It was Mrs. Anthony, a black-faced, strange little body, who always wore a brown dress, tight-fitting.

"I've n't," said Mrs. Morel.

"Eh, I wish he 'd come. I 've got a copperful of clothes an' I 'm sure I heered his bell."

"Hark! He 's at the end."

The two women looked down the alley. At the end o the Bottoms a man stood in a sort of old-fashioned trap bending over bundles of cream-coloured stuff; while a cluster of women held up their arms to him, some with bundles. Mrs. Anthony herself had a heap of creamy undyed stockings hanging over her arm.

"I 've done ten dozen this week," she said proudly to Mrs. Morel.

"T-t-t!" went the other. "I don't know how you can find time."

"Eh!" said Mrs. Anthony. "You can find time if you make time."

"I don't know how you do it," said Mrs. Morel. "And how much shall you get for those many?"

"Tuppence-ha'penny a dozen," replied the other.

"Well," said Mrs. Morel, "I 'd starve before I 'd sit down and seam twenty-four stockings for twopence ha'penny."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mrs. Anthony. "You can rip along with 'em."

Hose was coming along, ringing his bell. Women were waiting at the yard-ends with their seamed stockings hanging over their arms. The man, a common fellow, made jokes with them, tried to swindle them, and bullied them. Mrs. Morel went up her yard disdainfully.

It was an understood thing that if one woman wanted her neighbour, she should put the poker in the fire and bang at the back of the fireplace, which, as the fires were back to back, would make a great noise in the adjoining house. One morning Mrs. Kirk, mixing a pudding, nearly started out of her skin as she heard the thud, thud, in her grate. With her hands all floury, she rushed to the fence.

"Did you knock, Mrs. Morel?"

"If you would n't mind, Mrs. Kirk."

Mrs. Kirk climbed on to her copper, got over the wall on to Mrs. Morel's copper, and ran in to her neighbour.

"Eh, dear, how are you feeling?" she cried in concern.

"You might fetch Mrs. Bower," said Mrs. Morel.

Mrs. Kirk went into the yard, lifted up her strong, shrill voice, and called:

"Ag-gie — Ag-gie!"

The sound was heard from one end of the Bottoms to the other. At last Aggie came running up, and was sent for Mrs. Bower, whilst Mrs. Kirk left her pudding and stayed with her neighbour.

Mrs. Morel went to bed. Mrs. Kirk had Annie and William for dinner. Mrs. Bower, fat and waddling, bossed the house.

"Hash some cold meat up for the master's dinner, and make him an apple-charlotte pudding," said Mrs. Morel.

"He may go without pudding *this* day," said Mrs. Bower.

Morel was not as a rule one of the first to appear at the bottom of the pit, ready to come up. Some men were there before four o'clock, when the whistle blew loose-all; but Morel, whose stall, a poor one, was at this time about a mile and a half away from the bottom, worked usually till the first mate stopped, then he finished also. This day, however, the miner was sick of the work. At two o'clock he looked at his watch, by the light of the green candle — he was in a safe working — and again at half-past two. He was hewing at a piece of rock that was in the way for the next day's work. As he sat on his heels, or kneeled, giving hard blows with his pick, "Uszza — uszza!" he went.

"Shall ter finish, Sorry?"<sup>1</sup> cried Barker, his fellow butty.

"Finish? Niver while the world stands!" growled Morel. And he went on striking. He was tired.

"It's a heart-breaking job," said Barker.

<sup>1</sup> "Sorry" is a common form of address. It is, perhaps, a corruption of "sirrah."

But Morel was too exasperated, at the end of his tether, to answer. Still he struck and hacked with all his might.

"Tha might as well leave it, Walter," said Barker.  
"It 'll do to-morrow, without thee hackin' thy guts out."

"I 'll lay no b—— finger on this to-morrow, Is'r'l!" cried Morel.

"Oh, well, if tha' wunna, someb'dy else 'll ha'e to," said Israel.

Then Morel continued to strike.

"Hey-up there — *loose-a'*!" cried the men, leaving the next stall.

Morel continued to strike.

"Tha 'll happen catch me up," said Barker, departing.

When he had gone, Morel, left alone, felt savage. He had not finished his job. He had overworked himself into a frenzy. Rising, wet with sweat, he threw his tool down, pulled on his coat, blew out his candle, took his lamp, and went. Down the main road the lights of the other men went swinging. There was a hollow sound of many voices. It was a long, heavy tramp underground.

He sat at the bottom of the pit, where the great drops of water fell plash. Many colliers were waiting their turn to go up, talking noisily. Morel gave his answers short and disagreeable.

"It 's rainin', Sorry," said old Giles, who had had the news from the top.

Morel found one comfort. He had his old umbrella which he loved, in the lamp cabin. At last he took his stand on the chair, and was at the top in a moment. Then he handed in his lamp and got his umbrella, which he had bought at an auction for one-and-six. He stood on the edge of the pit-bank for a moment, looking out over the fields; grey rain was falling. The trucks stood full of wet, bright coal. Water ran down the sides of the waggons, over the white "C. W. and Co." Colliers, walking indifferent to the rain, were streaming down the line and up the field, a grey, dismal host. Morel put up his

umbrella, and took pleasure from the peppering of the drops thereon.

All along the road to Bestwood the miners tramped, wet and grey and dirty, but their red mouths talking with animation. Morel also walked with the gang, but he said nothing. He frowned peevishly as he went. Many men passed into the Prince of Wales or into Ellen's. Morel, feeling sufficiently disagreeable to resist temptation, trudged along under the dripping trees that overhung the park wall, and down the mud of Greenhill Lane.

Mrs. Morel lay in bed, listening to the rain, and the feet of the colliers from Minton, their voices, and the bang, bang of the gates as they went through the stile up the field.

"There's some herb beer behind the pantry-door," she said. "Th' master'll want a drink, if he does n't stop."

But he was late, so she concluded he had called for a drink, since it was raining. What did he care about the child or her?

She was very ill when her children were born.

"What is it?" she asked, feeling sick to death.

"A boy."

And she took consolation in that. The thought of being the mother of men was warming to her heart. She looked at the child. It had blue eyes, and a lot of fair hair, and was bonny. Her love came up hot, in spite of everything. She had it in bed with her.

Morel, thinking nothing, dragged his way up the garden path, wearily and angrily. He closed his umbrella, and stood it in the sink; then he slithered his heavy boots into the kitchen. Mrs. Bower appeared in the inner doorway.

"Well," she said, "she's about as bad as she can be. It's a boy childt."

The miner grunted, put his empty snap-bag and his tin bottle on the dresser, went back into the scullery and hung up his coat, then came and dropped into his chair.

"*Han yer got a drink?*" he asked.

The woman went into the pantry. There was h  
the pop of a cork. She set the mug, with a little,  
gusted rap, on the table before Morel. He drank, gas-  
wiped his big moustache on the end of his scarf, dr-  
gasped, and lay back in his chair. The woman would  
speak to him again. She set his dinner before him,  
went upstairs.

"Was that the master?" asked Mrs. Morel.

"I've gave him his dinner," replied Mrs. Bower.

After he had sat with his arms on the table — he  
sented the fact that Mrs. Bower put no cloth on for  
and gave him a little plate, instead of a full-sized din-  
plate — he began to eat. The fact that his wife wa  
that he had another boy, was nothing to him at  
moment. He was too tired; he wanted his dinner  
wanted to sit with his arms lying on the board; he  
not like having Mrs. Bower about. The fire was too s  
to please him.

After he had finished his meal, he sat for twenty  
utes; then he stoked up a big fire. Then, in his st  
inged feet, he went reluctantly upstairs. It was a st  
gle to face his wife at this moment, and he was t  
His face was black, and smeared with sweat. His sin  
had dried again, soaking the dirt in. He had a dirty v  
len scarf round his throat. So he stood at the foot  
the bed.

"Well, how are ter, then?" he asked.

"I s'll be all right," she answered.

"H'm!"

He stood at a loss what to say next. He was tired,  
this bother was rather a nuisance to him, and he di  
quite know where he was.

"A lad, tha' says," he stammered.

She turned down the sheet and showed the child.

"Bless him!" he murmured. Which made her la  
because he blessed by rote — pretending paternal emo  
which he did not feel just then.

"Go now," she said.

"I will, my lass," he answered, turning away.

Dismissed, he wanted to kiss her, but he dared not. She half wanted him to kiss her, but could not bring herself to give any sign. She only breathed freely when he was gone out of the room again, leaving behind him a faint smell of pit-dirt.

Mrs. Morel had a visit every day from the Congregational clergyman. Mr. Heaton was young, and very poor. His wife had died at the birth of his first baby, so he remained alone in the manse. He was a Bachelor of Arts of Cambridge, very shy, and no preacher. Mrs. Morel was fond of him, and he depended on her. For hours he talked to her, when she was well. He became the god-parent of the child.

Occasionally the minister stayed to tea with Mrs. Morel. Then she laid the cloth early, got out her best cups, with a little green rim, and hoped Morel would not come too soon; indeed, if he stayed for a pint, she would not mind this day. She had always two dinners to cook, because she believed children should have their chief meal at midday, whereas Morel needed his at five o'clock. So Mr. Heaton would hold the baby, whilst Mrs. Morel beat up a batter-pudding or peeled the potatoes, and he, watching her all the time, would discuss his next sermon. His ideas were quaint and fantastic. She brought him judiciously to earth. It was a discussion of the wedding at Cana.

"When He changed the water into wine at Cana," he said, "that is a symbol that the ordinary life, even the blood, of the married husband and wife, which had before been uninspired, like water, became filled with the Spirit, and was as wine, because, when love enters, the whole spiritual constitution of a man changes, is filled with the Holy Ghost, and almost his form is altered."

Mrs. Morel thought to herself:

"Yes, poor fellow, his young wife is dead; that is why he makes his love into the Holy Ghost."

They were halfway down their first cup of tea when they heard the slither of pit-boots.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Morel, in spite of herself.

The minister looked rather scared. Morel entered. He was feeling rather savage. He nodded a "How d' yer do" to the clergyman, who rose to shake hands with him.

"Nay," said Morel, showing his hand, "look thee at it! Tha niver wants ter shake hands wi' a hand like that, does ter? There's too much pick-haft and shovel-dirt on it."

The minister flushed with confusion, and sat down again. Mrs. Morel rose, carried out the steaming saucepan. Morel took off his coat, dragged his armchair to table, and sat down heavily.

"Are you tired?" asked the clergyman.

"Tired? I ham that," replied Morel. "You don't know what it is to be tired, as *I'm* tired."

"No," replied the clergyman.

"Why, look yer 'ere," said the miner, showing the shoulders of his singlet. "It's a bit dry now, but it's wet as a clout with sweat even yet. Feel it."

"Goodness!" cried Mrs. Morel. "Mr. Heaton does n't want to feel your nasty singlet."

The clergyman put out his hand gingerly.

"No, perhaps he does n't," said Morel; "but it's all come out of *me*, whether or not. An' iv'ry day alike my singlet's wringin' wet. 'Ave n't you got a drink, Missis, for a man when he comes home barkled up from the pit?"

"You know you drank all the beer," said Mrs. Morel, pouring out his tea.

"An' was there no more to be got?" Turning to the clergyman — "A man gets that caked up wi' th' dust, you know, — that clogged up down a coalmine, he *needs* a drink when he comes home."

"I am sure he does," said the clergyman.

"But it's ten to one if there's owt for him."

"There's water — and there's tea," said Mrs. Morel.  
"Water! It's not water as 'll clear his throat."

poured out a saucerful of tea, blew it, and sucked through his great black moustache, sighing after-

Then he poured out another saucerful, and stood  
on the table.

y cloth!" said Mrs. Morel, putting it on a plate.  
man as comes home as I do's too tired to care  
cloths," said Morel.

ty!" exclaimed his wife, sarcastically.

room was full of the smell of meat and vegetables  
t-clothes.

leaned over to the minister, his great moustache  
forward, his mouth very red in his black face.

r. Heaton," he said, "a man as has been down the  
hole all day, dingin' away at a coal face, yi, a sight  
than that wall — "

ed n't make a moan of it," put in Mrs. Morel.

hated her husband because, whenever he had an  
ce, he whined and played for sympathy. William,  
nursing the baby, hated him, with a boy's hatred  
se sentiment, and for the stupid treatment of his  
. Annie had never liked him; she merely avoided

n the minister had gone, Mrs. Morel looked at her

fine mess!" she said.

os't think I'm goin' to sit wi' my arms danglin',  
I's got a parson for tea wi' thee?" he bawled.

y were both angry, but she said nothing. The baby  
to cry, and Mrs. Morel, picking up a saucepan  
he hearth, accidentally knocked Annie on the head,  
pon the girl began to whine, and Morel to shout

In the midst of this pandemonium, William looked  
the big glazed text over the mantelpiece and read  
tly:

*"God Bless Our Home!"*

reupon Mrs. Morel, trying to soothe the baby,  
I up, rushed at him, boxed his ears, saying:  
*"What are you putting in for?"*

And then she sat down and laughed, till tears ran o her cheeks, while William kicked the stool he had b sitting on, and Morel growled:

"I canna see what there is so much to laugh at."

One evening, directly after the parson's visit, feel unable to bear herself after another display from her h band, she took Annie and the baby and went out. Me had kicked William, and the mother would never forg him.

She went over the sheep-bridge and across a corner the meadow to the cricket-ground. The meadows seen one space of ripe, evening light, whispering with the tant mill-race. She sat on a seat under the alders in cricket-ground, and fronted the evening. Before her, le and solid, spread the big green cricket-field, like the of a sea of light. Children played in the bluish sha of the pavilion. Many rooks, high up, came cawing he across the softly-woven sky. They stooped in a le curve down into the golden glow, concentrating, cawi wheeling, like black flakes on a slow vortex, over a ti clump that made a dark boss among the pasture.

A few gentlemen were practising, and Mrs. Morel co hear the chock of the ball, and the voices of men sudde roused; could see the white forms of men shifting silen over the green, upon which already the under shade were smouldering. Away at the grange, one side of haystacks was lit up, the other sides blue-grey. A w gon of sheaves rocked small across the melting yel light.

The sun was going down. Every open evening, the h of Derbyshire were blazed over with red sunset. M Morel watched the sun sink from the glistening sky, le ing a soft flower-blue overhead, while the western sp went red, as if all the fire had swum down there, leavi the bell cast flawless blue. The mountain-ash ber across the field stood fierily out from the dark leaves, a moment. A few shocks of corn in a corner of the fall stood up as if alive; she imagined them bowing; perha

son would be a Joseph. In the east, a mirrored sun floated pink opposite the west's scarlet. The big haystacks on the hillside, that butted into the glare, went blind.

With Mrs. Morel it was one of those still moments when the small frets vanish, and the beauty of things stands out, and she had the peace and the strength to see herself. Now and again, a swallow cut close to her. Now and again, Annie came up with a handful of alder-currants. The baby was restless on his mother's knee, clambering through his hands at the light.

Mrs. Morel looked down at him. She had dreaded this day like a catastrophe, because of her feeling for her husband. And now she felt strangely towards the infant. Her heart was heavy because of the child, almost as if it were unhealthy, or malformed. Yet it seemed quite well. But she noticed the peculiar knitting of the baby's brows, and the peculiar heaviness of its eyes, as if it were trying to understand something that was pain. She felt, when she looked at the child's dark, brooding pupils, as if a burden were on her heart.

"He looks as if he was thinking about something quite sorrowful," said Mrs. Kirk.

Suddenly, looking at him, the heavy feeling at the other's heart melted into passionate grief. She bowed over him, and a few tears shook swiftly out of her very heart. The baby lifted his fingers.

"My lamb!" she cried softly.

And at that moment she felt, in some far inner place of her soul, that she and her husband were guilty.

The baby was looking up at her. It had blue eyes like her own, but its look was heavy, steady, as if it had realized something that had stunned some point of its soul.

In her arms lay the delicate baby. Its deep blue eyes, always looking up at her unblinking, seemed to draw her innermost thoughts out of her. She no longer loved her husband; she had not wanted this child to come, and there

it lay in her arms and pulled at her heart. She felt as if the navel string that had connected its frail little body with hers had not been broken. A wave of hot love went over her to the infant. She held it close to her face and breast. With all her force, with all her soul she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unloved. She would love it all the more now it was here; carry it in her love. Its clear, knowing eyes gave her pain and fear. Did it know all about her? When it lay under her heart, had it been listening then? Was there a reproach in the look? She felt the marrow melt in her bones, with fear and pain.

Once more she was aware of the sun lying red on the rim of the hill opposite. She suddenly held up the child in her hands.

“Look!” she said. “Look, my pretty!”

She thrust the infant forward to the crimson, throbbing sun, almost with relief. She saw him lift his little fist. Then she put him to her bosom again, ashamed almost of her impulse to give him back again whence he came.

“If he lives,” she thought to herself, “what will become of him — what will he be?”

Her heart was anxious.

“I will call him ‘Paul,’ ” she said suddenly; she knew not why.

After a while she went home. A fine shadow was flung over the deep green meadow, darkening all.

As she expected, she found the house empty. But Morel was home by ten o’clock, and that day, at least, ended peacefully.

Walter Morel was, at this time, exceedingly irritable. His work seemed to exhaust him. When he came home he did not speak civilly to anybody. If the fire were rather low he bullied about that; he grumbled about dinner; if the children made a chatter he shouted them in a way that made their mother’s blood boil, and made them hate him.

*On the Saturday*, he was not home by eleven o’clo-

The baby was unwell, and was restless, crying if he were down. Mrs. Morel, tired to death, and still weak, was scarcely under control.

"I wish the nuisance would come," she said wearily to self.

The child at last sank down to sleep in her arms. She was too tired to carry him to the cradle.

"But I'll say nothing, whatever time he comes," she said. "It only works me up; I won't say anything. But now if he does anything it'll make my blood boil," she added to herself.

She sighed, hearing him coming, as if it were something she could not bear. He, taking his revenge, was nearly drunk. She kept her head bent over the child as he entered, not wishing to see him. But it went through her like a flash of hot fire when, in passing, he lurched past the dresser, setting the tins rattling, and clutched the white pot knobs for support. He hung up his hat and coat, then returned, stood glowering from a distance over, as she sat bowed over the child.

"Is there nothing to eat in the house?" he asked, intently, as if to a servant. In certain stages of his incitation he affected the clipped, mincing speech of the masters. Mrs. Morel hated him most in this condition.

"You know what there is in the house," she said, so coolly, it sounded impersonal.

He stood and glared at her without moving a muscle. "I asked a civil question, and I expect a civil answer," he said affectedly.

"And you got it," she said, still ignoring him.

He glowered again. Then he came unsteadily forward, leaning on the table with one hand, and with the other hand reached at the table drawer to get a knife to cut bread. The drawer stuck because he pulled sideways. In a temper he dragged it, so that it flew out bodily, and spoons, forks, knives, a hundred metallic things, splashed with a clatter and a clang upon the brick floor. The baby gave a little surprised start.

"What are you doing, clumsy, drunken fool?" mother cried.

"Then tha should get the flamin' thing thysen. 'should get up, like other women have to, an' wait o man."

"Wait on you — wait on you?" she cried. "Ye see myself."

"Yis, an' I'll learn thee tha's got to. Wait on yes, tha sh'l't wait on me — "

"Never, milord. I'd wait on a dog at the door fir

"What — what?"

He was trying to fit in the drawer. At her last speech he turned round. His face was crimson, his eyes bloodshot. He stared at her one silent second in threat.

"P-h!" she went quickly, in contempt.

He jerked at the drawer in his excitement. It fell, sharply on his shin, and on the reflex he flung it at her.

One of the corners caught her brow as the shattered drawer crashed into the fireplace. She swayed, almost fell stunned from her chair. To her very soul she was sick; she clasped the child tightly to her bosom. A few moments elapsed; then, with an effort, she brought herself to. The baby was crying plaintively. Her left hand was bleeding rather profusely. As she glanced down at the child, her brain reeling, some drops of blood soaked into its white shawl; but the baby was at least not hurt. She balanced her head to keep equilibrium, so that no more blood ran into her eye.

Walter Morel remained as he had stood, leaning on the table with one hand, looking blank. When he was sufficiently sure of his balance, he went across to her, swaying, caught hold of the back of her rocking-chair, almost toppling her out; then, leaning forward over her, and swaying as he spoke, he said, in tone of wondering concern:

"Did it catch thee?"

*He swayed again, as if he would pitch on to the child; with the catastrophe he had lost all balance.*

Go away," she said, struggling to keep her presence ind.

He hiccupped. "Let's — let's look at it," he said, coughing again.

"Go away!" she cried.

"Lemme — lemme look at it, lass."

He smelted him of drink, felt the unequal pull of his strong grasp on the back of her rocking-chair.

"Go away," she said, and weakly she pushed him off.

He stood, uncertain in balance, gazing upon her. Summing all her strength she rose, the baby on one arm.

After a cruel effort of will, moving as if in sleep, she went across to the scullery, where she bathed her eye for a minute in cold water; but she was too dizzy. Afraid lest she should swoon, she returned to her rocking-chair, trembling in every fibre. By instinct, she kept the baby clasped. Morel, bothered, had succeeded in pushing the drawer back into its cavity, and was on his knees, groping, with his paws, for the scattered spoons.

Her brow was still bleeding. Presently Morel got up and came craning his neck towards her.

"What has it done to thee, lass?" he asked, in a very broken, humble tone.

"You can see what it's done," she answered.

He stood, bending forward, supported on his hands, and grasped his legs just above the knee. He peered look at the wound. She drew away from the thrust of his face with its great moustache, averting her own face as much as possible. As he looked at her, who was cold and impassive as stone, with mouth shut tight, he sickened with feebleness and hopelessness of spirit. He was moving drearily away, when he saw a drop of blood fall from the averted wound into the baby's fragile, glistening face.

Fascinated, he watched the heavy dark drop hang like a glistening cloud, and pull down the gossamer. Another drop fell. It would soak through to the baby's skin. He watched, fascinated, feeling it soak in; then, suddenly, his manhood broke.

"What of this child?" was all his wife said to him. But her low, intense tones brought his head lower. It softened: "Get me some wadding out of the middle drawer," she said.

He stumbled away very obediently, presently returning with a pad, which she singed before the fire, then put her forehead, as she sat with the baby on her lap.

"Now that clean pit-scarf."

Again he rummaged and fumbled in the drawer, turning presently with a red, narrow scarf. She took it, and with trembling fingers proceeded to bind it round her head.

"Let me tie it for thee," he said humbly.

"I can do it myself," she replied. When it was done she went upstairs, telling him to rake the fire and close the door.

In the morning Mrs. Morel said:

"I knocked against the latch of the coal-place, while I was getting a raker in the dark, because the candle blew out." Her two small children looked up at her wide, dismayed eyes. They said nothing, but their pale lips seemed to express the unconscious tragedy they felt.

Walter Morel lay in bed next day until nearly dinner-time. He did not think of the previous evening's quarrel. He scarcely thought of anything, but he would not think of that. He lay and suffered like a sulking dog. He hurt himself most; and he was the more damaged because he would never say a word to her, or express his sorrow. He tried to wriggle out of it. "It was her own fault," he said to himself. Nothing, however, could prevent the inner consciousness inflicting on him the punishment which ate into his spirit like rust, and which he could only alleviate by drinking.

He felt as if he had not the initiative to get up, or to say a word, or to move, but could only lie like a dead man. Moreover, he had himself violent pains in the head. It was Saturday. Towards noon he rose, cut himself

in the pantry, ate it with his head dropped, then pulled on his boots, and went out, to return at three o'clock slightly tipsy and relieved; then once more straight to bed. He rose again at six in the evening, had tea and went straight out.

Sunday was the same: bed till noon, the Palmerston Arms till 2.30, dinner, and bed; scarcely a word spoken. When Mrs. Morel went upstairs, towards four o'clock, to put on her Sunday dress, he was fast asleep. She would have felt sorry for him, if he had once said, "Wife, I'm sorry." But no; he insisted to himself it was her fault. And so he broke himself. So she merely left him alone. There was this deadlock of passion between them, and she was stronger.

The family began tea. Sunday was the only day when all sat down to meals together.

"Is n't my father going to get up?" asked William.

"Let him lie," the mother replied.

There was a feeling of misery over all the house. The children breathed the air that was poisoned, and they felt dreary. They were rather disconsolate, did not know what to do, what to play at.

Immediately Morel woke he got straight out of bed. That was characteristic of him all his life. He was all for activity. The prostrated inactivity of two mornings was stifling him.

It was near six o'clock when he got down. This time he entered without hesitation, his wincing sensitiveness having hardened again. He did not care any longer what the family thought or felt.

The tea-things were on the table. William was reading aloud from "*The Child's Own*," Annie listening and asking eternally "Why?" Both children hushed into silence as they heard the approaching thud of their father's stocking feet, and shrank as he entered. Yet he was usually indulgent to them.

Morel made the meal alone, brutally. He ate and drank more noisily than he had need. No one spoke to him

The family life withdrew, shrank away, and became hush as he entered. But he cared no longer about his alienation.

Immediately he had finished tea he rose with alacrity to go out. It was this alacrity, this haste to be gone which so sickened Mrs. Morel. As she heard him splash heartily in cold water, heard the eager scratch of steel comb on the side of the bowl, as he wetted his hair, she closed her eyes in disgust. As he bent over, lacing his boots, there was a certain vulgar gusto in his movement that divided him from the reserved, watchful regard of the family. He always ran away from the battle with himself. Even in his own heart's privacy, he excused himself, saying, "If she had n't said so-and-so, it would never have happened. She asked for what she's going to." The children waited in restraint during his preparations. When he had gone, they sighed with relief.

He closed the door behind him, and was glad. It was a rainy evening. The Palmerston would be the cosiness. He hastened forward in anticipation. All the slate roofs of the Bottoms shone black with wet. The roads, always dark with coal-dust, were full of blackish mud. He hastened along. The Palmerston windows were steamed over. The passage was paddled with wet feet. But the air was warm, if foul, and full of the sound of voices and the smell of beer and smoke.

"What shollt ha'e, Walter?" cried a voice, as soon as Morel appeared in the doorway.

"Oh, Jim, my lad, wheriver has thee sprung frae?" The men made a seat for him, and took him in warmly. He was glad. In a minute or two they had thawed all responsibility out of him, all shame, all trouble, and he was clear as a bell for a jolly night.

On the Wednesday following, Morel was penniless. He dreaded his wife. Having hurt her, he hated her. He did not know what to do with himself that evening, having not even twopence with which to go to the Palmerston, and being already rather deeply in debt. So, while his wife was down the garden with the child, he hunted in

top drawer of the dresser where she kept her purse, found it, and looked inside. It contained a half-crown, two half-pennies, and a sixpence. So he took the sixpence, put the purse carefully back, and went out.

The next day, when she wanted to pay the greengrocer, she looked in the purse for her sixpence, and her heart sank to her shoes. Then she sat down and thought: "Was there a sixpence? I had n't spent it, had I? And I had n't left it anywhere else?"

She was much put about. She hunted round everywhere for it. And, as she thought, the conviction came into her heart that her husband had taken it. What she had in her purse was all the money she possessed. But that he should sneak it from her thus was unbearable. He had done so twice before. The first time she had not accused him, and at the week-end he had put the shilling again into her purse. So that was how she had known he had taken it. The second time he had not paid back.

This time she felt it was too much. When he had had his dinner — he came home early that day — she said to him coldly:

"Did you take sixpence out of my purse last night?"

"Me!" he said, looking up in an offended way. "No, I didna! I niver clapped eyes on your purse."

But she could detect the lie.

"Why, you know you did," she said quietly.

"I tell you I didna," he shouted. "Yer at me again, are yer? I 've had about enough on 't."

"So you filch sixpence out of my purse while I 'm taking the clothes in."

"I 'll may yer pay for this," he said, pushing back his hair in desperation. He bustled and got washed, then went determinedly upstairs. Presently he came down dressed, and with a big bundle in a blue-checked, enormous handkerchief.

"And now," he said, "you 'll see me again when you "

"It 'll be before I want to," she replied; and at the

he marched out of the house with his bundle. She trembled slightly, but her heart brimming with content. What would she do if he went to some other pit, obtained work, and got in with another woman? But she knew too well — he could n't. She was dead sure of it. Nevertheless her heart was gnawed inside her.

"Where's my dad?" said William, coming in from school.

"He says he's run away," replied the mother.

"Where to?"

"Eh, I don't know. He's taken a bundle in the handkerchief, and says he's not coming back."

"What shall we do?" cried the boy.

"Eh, never trouble, he won't go far."

"But if he does n't come back," wailed Annie.

And she and William retired to the sofa and Mrs. Morel sat and laughed.

"You pair of gabeys!" she exclaimed. "You've him before the night's out."

But the children were not to be consoled. Time came on. Mrs. Morel grew anxious from very weariness. One part of her said, it would be a relief to see the boy again; another part fretted because of keeping the children; and inside her, as yet, she could not quite let go. At the bottom, she knew very well he could not go.

When she went down to the coal-place at the end of the garden, however, she felt something behind the bundle. So she looked. And there in the dark lay the big bundle. She sat on a piece of coal in front of the bundle and laughed. Every time she saw it, so fat and yet so ignominious, slunk into its corner in the dark, with its ends flopping like dejected ears from the knots. She laughed again. She was relieved.

Mrs. Morel sat waiting. He had not any money, so if he stopped he was running up a bill. She was very tired of him — tired to death. He had not even the courage to carry his bundle beyond the yard-end.

*As she meditated, at about nine o'clock, he opened*

oor and came in, slinking, and yet sulky. She said not word. He took off his coat, and slunk to his armchair, where he began to take off his boots.

"You'd better fetch your bundle before you take your boots off," she said quietly.

"You may thank your stars I've come back to-night," said, looking up from under his dropped head, sulkily, trying to be impressive.

"Why, where should you have gone? You dare n't even get your parcel through the yard-end," she said.

He looked such a fool she was not even angry with him. He continued to take his boots off and prepare for bed.

"I don't know what's in your blue handkerchief," she said. "But if you leave it the children shall fetch it in the morning."

Whereupon he got up and went out of the house, returning presently and crossing the kitchen with averted face, hurrying upstairs. As Mrs. Morel saw him slink sickly through the inner doorway, holding his bundle, she laughed to herself; but her heart was bitter, because she had loved him.

## CHAPTER III

THE CASTING OFF OF MOREL — THE TAKING ON OF WILLIAM

DURING the next week Morel's temper was almost unbearable. Like all miners, he was a great lover of medicines, which, strangely enough, he would often pay for himself.

" You mun get me a drop o' laxy vitral," he said. " It's a winder as we canna ha'e a sup i' th' 'ouse."

So Mrs. Morel bought him elixir of vitriol, his favourite first medicine. And he made himself a jug of wormwood tea. He had hanging in the attic great bunches of dried herbs: wormwood, rue, horehound, elder-flowers, parsley-purt, marshmallow, hyssop, dandelion, and centuary. Usually there was a jug of one or other decoction standing on the hob, from which he drank largely.

" Grand!" he said, smacking his lips after wormwood.  
" Grand!" And he exhorted the children to try.

" It's better than any of your tea or your cocoa stews," he vowed. But they were not to be tempted.

This time, however, neither pills nor vitriol nor all his herbs would shift the " nasty peens in his head." He was sickening for an attack of an inflammation of the brain. He had never been well since his sleeping on the ground when he went with Jerry to Nottingham. Since then he had drunk and stormed. Now he fell seriously ill, and Mrs. Morel had him to nurse. He was one of the worst patients imaginable. But, in spite of all, and putting aside the fact that he was bread-winner, she never quite wanted him to die. Still there was one part of her wanted him for herself.

*The neighbours were very good to her: occasionally some had the children in to meals, occasionally some would*

downstairs work for her, one would mind the baby y. But it was a great drag, nevertheless. It was y day the neighbours helped. Then she had nurs baby and husband, cleaning and cooking, every do. She was quite worn out, but she did what ted of her.

the money was just sufficient. She had seventeen a week from clubs, and every Friday Barker and r butty put by a portion of the stall's profits for wife. And the neighbours made broths, and gave d such invalids' trifles. If they had not helped enerously in those times, Mrs. Morel would never lled through, without incurring debts that would gged her down.

weeks passed. Morel, almost against hope, grew He had a fine constitution, so that, once on the e went straight forward to recovery. Soon he was g about downstairs. During his illness his wifeilt him a little. Now he wanted her to continue. a put his hand to his head, pulled down the cor his mouth, and shammed pains he did not feel. re was no deceiving her. At first she merely o herself. Then she scolded him sharply.  
dness, man, don't be so lachrymose."

wounded him slightly, but still he continued to kness.

ould n't be such a mardy baby," said his wife

he was indignant, and cursed under his breath, y. He was forced to resume a normal tone, and to whine.

theless, there was a state of peace in the house for ie. Mrs. Morel was more tolerant of him, and he, g on her almost like a child, was rather happy. knew that she was more tolerant because she n less. Up till this time, in spite of all, he had husband and her man. She had felt that, more what he did to himself he did to her. Her living

depended on him. There were many, many stages of ebbing of her love for him, but it was always ebbing.

Now, with the birth of this third baby, her longer set towards him, helplessly, but was like that scarcely rose, standing off from him. After scarcely desired him. And, standing more alone him, not feeling him so much part of herself, but part of her circumstances, she did not mind so much he did, could leave him alone.

There was the halt, the wistfulness about the year, which is like autumn in a man's life. His wife casting him off, half regretfully, but relentlessly; him off and turning now for love and life to the children. Henceforward he was more or less a husk. And acquiesced, as so many men do, yielding their place to their children.

During his recuperation, when it was really between them, both made an effort to come back so to the old relationship of the first months of the marriage. He sat at home and, when the children were in bed, and she was sewing — she did all her sewing by hand — he would sit beside her and read to her from the newspaper, slowly pronouncing the livering words like a man pitching quoits. Once he hurried him on, giving him a phrase in anticipation, then he took her words humbly.

The silences between them were peculiar. There would be the swift, slight "cluck" of her needle, the sharp "pop" of his lips as he let out the smoke, the sharp sizzle on the bars as he spat in the fire. These thoughts turned to William. Already he was getting to be a boy. Already he was top of the class, and the teacher said he was the smartest lad in the school. She had always been fond of him, a man, young, full of vigour, making the world again for her.

And Morel sitting there, quite alone, and having nothing to think about, would be feeling vaguely uncomfortable. His soul would reach out in its blind

id find her gone. He felt a sort of emptiness, almost vacuum in his soul. He was unsettled and restless. he could not live in that atmosphere, and he affected fe. Both felt an oppression on their breathing when were left together for some time. Then he went to id she settled down to enjoy herself alone, working, ng, living.

unwhile another infant was coming, fruit of this peace and tenderness between the separating parents. was seventeen months old when the new baby was

He was then a plump, pale child, quiet, with heavy yes, and still the peculiar slight knitting of the

The last child was also a boy, fair and bonny. Morel was sorry when she knew she was with child, for economic reasons and because she did not love isband; but not for the sake of the infant.

y called the baby Arthur. He was very pretty, a mop of gold curls, and he loved his father from rst. Mrs. Morel was glad this child loved the . Hearing the miner's footsteps, the baby would o his arms and crow. And if Morel were in a good r, he called back immediately, in his hearty, mellow

hat then, my beauty? I sh'll come to thee in a e."

I as soon as he had taken off his pit-coat, Mrs. would put an apron round the child, and give him father.

hat a sight the lad looks!" she would exclaim imes, taking back the baby, that was smutted on ce from his father's kisses and play. Then Morel ed joyfully.

e's a little collier, bless his bit o' mutton!" he med.

I these were the happy moments of her life now, the children included the father in her heart.

unwhile William grew bigger and stronger and more while Paul, always rather delicate and quiet, got

slimmer, and trotted after his mother like her shadow. He was usually active and interested, but sometimes would have fits of depression. Then the mother would find the boy of three or four crying on the sofa.

"What's the matter?" she asked, and got no answer.

"What's the matter?" she insisted, getting cross.

"I don't know," sobbed the child.

So she tried to reason him out of it, or to amuse him, but without effect. It made her feel beside herself. Then the father, always impatient, would jump from his chair and shout:

"If he does n't stop, I'll smack him till he does."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said the mother coldly. And then she carried the child into the yard, plumped him into his little chair, and said: "Now cry there, Misery!"

And then a butterfly on the rhubarb-leaves perhaps caught his eye, or at last he cried himself to sleep. These fits were not often, but they caused a shadow in Mr. Morel's heart, and her treatment of Paul was different from that of the other children.

Suddenly one morning as she was looking down the alleys of the Bottoms for the barm-man, she heard a voice calling her. It was the thin little Mrs. Anthony in brown velvet.

"Here, Mrs. Morel, I want to tell you about you Willie."

"Oh, do you?" replied Mrs. Morel. "Why, what's the matter?"

"A lad as gets 'old of another an' rips his clothes off 'is back," Mrs. Anthony said, "wants showing something."

"Your Alfred's as old as my William," said Mrs. Morel.

"Appen 'e is, but that does n't give him a right to get hold of the boy's collar, an' fair rip it clean off his back."

"Well," said Mrs. Morel, "I don't thrash my children and even if I did, I should want to hear their side of the tale."

ey'd happen be a bit better if they did get a good  
retorted Mrs. Anthony. "When it comes ter  
a lad's clean collar off'n 'is back a purpose —"  
n' sure he didn't do it on purpose," said Mrs.

ake me a liar!" shouted Mrs. Anthony.

Morel moved away and closed her gate. Her hand  
d as she held her mug of barm.

t I s'll let your mester know," Mrs. Anthony cried  
er.

inner-time, when William had finished his meal and  
to be off again — he was then eleven years old —  
her said to him:

hat did you tear Alfred Anthony's collar for?"

ien did I tear his collar?"

on't know when, but his mother says you did."

iy — it was yesterday — an' it was torn a'ready."

t you tore it more."

ll, I'd got a cobbler as 'ad licked seventeen — an'  
nt'ny 'e says:

'Adam an' Eve an' pinch-me,  
Went down to a river to bade.  
Adam an' Eve got drownded,  
Who do yer think got saved?'

I says, 'Oh, Pinch-you,' an' so I pinched 'im, an'  
nad, an' so he snatched my cobbler an' run off with  
' so I run after 'im, an' when I was gettin' hold  
'e dodged, an' it ripped 'is collar. But I got my  
—"

ulled from his pocket a black old horse-chestnut  
g on a string. This old cobbler had "cobbled" —  
I smashed — seventeen other cobblers on similar  
So the boy was proud of his veteran.

ll," said Mrs. Morel, "you know you've got no  
rip his collar."

ll, our mother!" he answered. "I never meant

tr'a done it — an' it was on'y an old indirubber collar as was torn a'ready."

"Next time," said his mother, "you be more careful. I should n't like it if you came home with your collar torn off."

"I don't care, our mother; I never did it a-purpose." The boy was rather miserable at being reprimanded.

"No — well, you be more careful."

William fled away, glad to be exonerated. And Mrs. Morel, who hated any bother with the neighbours, thought she would explain to Mrs. Anthony, and the business would be over.

But that evening Morel came in from the pit looking very sour. He stood in the kitchen and glared round, but did not speak for some minutes. Then:

"Wheer's that Willy?" he asked.

"What do you want *him* for?" asked Mrs. Morel, who had guessed.

"I'll let 'im know when I get him," said Morel, banging his pit-bottle on to the dresser.

"I suppose Mrs. Anthony's got hold of you and been yarning to you about their Alfy's collar," said Mrs. Morel, rather sneering.

"Niver mind who's got hold of me," said Morel. "When I get hold of 'im I'll make his bones rattle."

"It's a poor tale," said Mrs. Morel, "that you're so ready to side with any snipey vixen who likes to come telling tales against your own children."

"I'll learn 'im!" said Morel. "It none matters to me whose lad 'e is; 'e's none goin' rippin' an' tearing about just as he's a mind."

"Ripping and tearing about! repeated Mrs. Morel. "He was running after that Alfy, who'd taken his cobbler, and he accidentally got hold of his collar, because the other dodged — as an Anthony would."

"I know!" shouted Morel threateningly.

"*You would, before you're told,*" replied his W  
*bitingly.*

"Niver you mind," stormed Morel. "I know my business."

"That's more than doubtful," said Mrs. Morel, "supposing some loud-mouthed creature had been getting you to thrash your own children."

"I know," repeated Morel.

And he said no more, but sat and nursed his bad temper. Suddenly William ran in, saying:

"Can I have my tea, mother?"

"Tha can ha'e more than that!" shouted Morel.

"Hold your noise, man," said Mrs. Morel; "and don't look so ridiculous."

"He'll look ridiculous before I've done wi' him!" shouted Morel, rising from his chair and glaring at his son.

William, who was a tall lad for his years, but very sensitive, had gone pale, and was looking in a sort of horror at his father.

"Go out!" Mrs. Morel commanded her son.

William had not the wit to move. Suddenly Morel clenched his fist, and crouched.

"I'll gi'e him 'go out'!" he shouted like an insane thing.

"What!" cried Mrs. Morel, panting with rage. "You shall not touch him for *her* telling, you shall not!"

"Shonna I?" shouted Morel. "Shonna I?"

And, glaring at the boy, he ran forward. Mrs. Morel sprang in between them, with her fist lifted.

"Don't you *dare!*" she cried.

"What!" he shouted, baffled for the moment.  
"What!"

She spun round to her son.

"*Go* out of the house!" she commanded him in fury.

The boy, as if hypnotized by her, turned suddenly and was gone. Morel rushed to the door, but was too late. He returned, pale under his pit-dirt with fury. But now wife was fully roused.

*Only dare!*" she said in a loud, ringing voice. "On

dare, milord, to lay a finger on that child! You'll re it for ever."

He was afraid of her. In a towering rage, he sat d

When the children were old enough to be left, Morel joined the Women's Guild. It was a little clu women attached to the Co-operative Wholesale Soc which met on Monday night in the long room over grocery shop of the Bestwood "Co-op." The we were supposed to discuss the benefits to be derived co-operation, and other social questions. Sometimes Morel read a paper. It seemed queer to the childre see their mother, who was always busy about the ho sitting writing in her rapid fashion, thinking, referrin books, and writing again. They felt for her on such o sions the deepest respect.

But they loved the Guild. It was the only thin which they did not grudge their mother — and that pa because she enjoyed it, partly because of the treats derived from it. The Guild was called by some ho husbands, who found their wives getting too independe the "clat-fart" shop — that is, the gossip shop. I true, from off the basis of the Guild, the women could at their homes, at the conditions of their own lives, find fault. So the colliers found their women had a standard of their own, rather disconcerting. And Mrs. Morel always had a lot of news on Monday nig so that the children liked William to be in when t mother came home, because she told him things.

Then, when the lad was thirteen, she got him a jo the "Co-op" office. He was a very clever boy, fr with rather rough features and real viking blue eyes

"What dost want ter ma'e a stool-harsed Jack on for?" said Morel. "All he 'll do is to wear his brit behind out, an' earn nowt. What's 'e startin' wi?'

"It does n't matter what he's starting with," said Morel.

"It wouldna! Put 'im i' th' pit wi' me, an' 'e'll e a easy ten shillin' a wik from th' start. But six shi

' his truck-end out on a stool's better than ten  
i' th' pit wi' me, I know."

e is *not* going in the pit," said Mrs. Morel, " and  
s an end of it."

wor good enough for me, but it 's non good enough  
n."

your mother put you in the pit at twelve, it 's no  
why I should do the same with my lad."

welve! It wor a sight afore that!"

'henever it was," said Mrs. Morel.

was very proud of her son. He went to the night-  
, and learned shorthand, so that by the time he was  
n he was the best shorthand clerk and book-keeper  
place, except one. Then he taught in the night-  
. But he was so fiery that only his good-nature  
s size protected him.

the things that men do — the decent things —  
m did. He could run like the wind. When he was  
he won a first prize in a race — an inkstand of  
shaped like an anvil. It stood proudly on the  
, and gave Mrs. Morel a keen pleasure. The boy  
an for her. He flew home with his anvil, breathless,  
"Look, mother!" That was the first real tribute  
self. She took it like a queen.  
ow pretty!" she exclaimed.

en he began to get ambitious. He gave all his money  
mother. When he earned fourteen shillings a week,  
ive him back two for himself, and, as he never drank,  
himself rich. He went about with the bourgeois of  
ood. The townlet contained nothing higher than the  
man. Then came the bank manager, then the doc-  
then the tradespeople, and after that the hosts of  
s. William began to consort with the sons of the  
st, the schoolmaster, and the tradesmen. He played  
ds in the Mechanics Hall. Also he danced — this  
te of his mother. All the life that Bestwood offered  
oyed, from the sixpenny-hops down Church Street,  
arts and billiards.

Paul was treated to dazzling descriptions of all kinds of flower-like ladies, most of whom lived like cut blooms in William's heart for a brief fortnight.

Occasionally some flame would come in pursuit of her errant swain. Mrs. Morel would find a strange girl at the door, and immediately she sniffed the air.

"Is Mr. Morel in?" the damsel would ask appealingly.

"My husband is at home," Mrs. Morel replied.

"I—I mean *young* Mr. Morel," repeated the maiden painfully.

"Which one? There are several."

Whereupon much blushing and stammering from the fair one.

"I—I met Mr. Morel—at Ripley," she explained.

"Oh—at a dance!"

"Yes."

"I don't approve of the girls my son meets at dances. And he is *not* at home."

Then he came home angry with his mother for having turned the girl away so rudely. He was a careless, yet eager-looking fellow, who walked with long strides, sometimes frowning, often with his cap pushed jollily to the back of his head. Now he came in frowning. He threw his cap on to the sofa, and took his strong jaw in his hand, and glared down at his mother. She was small, with her hair taken straight back from her forehead. She had a quiet air of authority, and yet of rare warmth. Knowing her son was angry, she trembled inwardly.

"Did a lady call for me yesterday, mother?" he asked.

"I don't know about a lady. There was a girl came."

"And why did n't you tell me?"

"Because I forgot, simply."

He fumed a little.

"A good-looking girl—seemed a lady?"

"I did n't look at her."

"Big brown eyes?"

"*I did not* look. And tell your girls, my son, that w  
*they're running* after you, they're not to come, and

mother for you. Tell them that — brazen baggages meet at dancing-classes."

"I'm sure she was a nice girl."

"And I'm sure she was n't."

ere ended the altercation. Over the dancing there great strife between the mother and the son. The once reached its height when William said he was go to Hucknall Torkard — considered a low town — to ey-dress ball. He was to be a Highlander. There dress he could hire, which one of his friends had and which fitted him perfectly. The Highland suit home. Mrs. Morel received it coldly and would not k it.

"My suit come?" cried William.

"There's a parcel in the front-room."

He rushed in and cut the string.

"How do you fancy your son in this!" he said, en red, showing her the suit.

"You know I don't want to fancy you in it."

the evening of the dance, when he had come home less, Mrs. Morel put on her coat and bonnet.

"Aren't you going to stop and see me, mother?" he

"No; I don't want to see you," she replied.

She was rather pale, and her face was closed and hard. was afraid of her son's going the same way as his r. He hesitated a moment, and his heart stood still unxiety. Then he caught sight of the Highland bon with its ribbons. He picked it up gleefully, forgetting She went out.

When he was nineteen he suddenly left the Co-op office ot a situation in Nottingham. In his new place he thirty shillings a week instead of eighteen. This was l a rise. His mother and his father were brimmed th pride. Everybody praised William. It seemed s going to get on rapidly. Mrs. Morel hoped, with d, to help her younger sons. Annie was now studying a teacher. Paul, also very clever, was getting on

well, having lessons in French and German from his god-father, the clergyman who was still a friend to Mrs. Morel. Arthur, a spoilt and very good-looking boy, was at the Board-school, but there was talk of his trying to get a scholarship for the High School in Nottingham.

William remained a year at his new post in Nottingham. He was studying hard, and growing serious. Something seemed to be fretting him. Still he went out to the dances and the river parties. He did not drink. The children were all rabid teetotallers. He came home very late at night, and sat yet longer studying. His mother implored him to take more care, to do one thing or another.

"Dance, if you want to dance, my son; but don't think you can work in the office, and then amuse yourself, and then study on top of all. You can't; the human frame won't stand it. Do one thing or the other — amuse yourself or learn Latin; but don't try to do both."

Then he got a place in London, at a hundred and twenty a year. This seemed a fabulous sum. His mother doubted almost whether to rejoice or to grieve.

"They want me in Lime Street on Monday week, mother," he cried, his eyes blazing as he read the letter. Mrs. Morel felt everything go silent inside her. He read the letter: "'And will you reply by Thursday whether you accept. Yours faithfully —' They want me, mother, at a hundred and twenty a year, and don't even ask to see me. Didn't I tell you I could do it! Think of me in London! And I can give you twenty pounds a year, mater. We'll all be rolling in money."

"We shall, my son," she answered sadly.

It never occurred to him that she might be more hurt at his going away than glad of his success. Indeed, as the days drew near for his departure, her heart began close and grow dreary with despair. She loved him much! More than that, she hoped in him so much. All she lived by him. She liked to do things for him; liked to put a cup for his tea and to iron his collar,

## *Casting off of Morel*

ch he was so proud. It was a joy to her to have  
ud of his collars. There was no laundry. So she u  
ub away at them with her little convex iron, to po  
n, till they shone from the sheer pressure of her an  
v she would not do it for him. Now he was goi  
y. She felt almost as if he were going as well out  
heart. He did not seem to leave her inhabited wi  
self. That was the grief and the pain to her. He too  
rly all himself away.

A few days before his departure — he was just twenty  
ie burned his love-letters. They had hung on a file a  
top of the kitchen cupboard. From some of them he  
read extracts to his mother. Some of them she had  
en the trouble to read herself. But most were too  
ial.

Now, on the Saturday morning he said:

"Come on, Postle, let 's go through my letters, and you  
have the birds and flowers."

Mrs. Morel had done her Saturday's work on the Fri  
because he was having a last day's holiday. She was  
ing him a rice cake, which he loved, to take with him.  
was scarcely conscious that she was so miserable.

He took the first letter off the file. It was mauve-tinted,  
had purple and green thistles. William sniffed the

"Nice scent! Smell."

He thrust the sheet under Paul's nose.

"Um!" said Paul, breathing in. "What d' you call it?  
mother."

Mother ducked her small, fine nose down to the

"Don't want to smell their rubbish," she said, sniffing.  
"This girl's father," said William, "is as rich as

He owns property without end. She calls me  
e, because I know French. 'You will see, I 've  
you' — I like *her* forgiving me. 'I told mother  
this morning, and she will have much pleasure  
me to tea on Sunday, but she will have to go

father's consent also. I sincerely hope he will agree. will let you know how it transpires. If, however, you —'

"Let you know how it ' what?" interrupted Mr Morel.

"Transpires' — oh yes!"

"Transpires'!" repeated Mrs. Morel mockingly. "thought she was so well educated!"

William felt slightly uncomfortable, and abandoned this maiden, giving Paul the corner with the thistles. He continued to read extracts from his letters, some of which amused his mother, some of which saddened her and made her anxious for him.

"My lad," she said, "they're very wise. They know they've only got to flatter your vanity, and you press up to them like a dog that has its head scratched."

"Well, they can't go on scratching for ever," he replied. "And when they've done, I trot away."

"But one day you'll find a string round your neck that you can't pull off," she answered.

"Not me! I'm equal to any of 'em, mater, they need n't flatter themselves."

"You flatter *yourself*," she said quietly.

Soon there was a heap of twisted black pages, all that remained of the file of scented letters, except that Paul had thirty or forty pretty tickets from the corners of the note-paper — swallows and forget-me-nots and ivy sprays. And William went to London, to start a new file.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE YOUNG LIFE OF PAUL

AUL would be built like his mother, slightly and rather small. His fair hair went reddish, and then dark brown; his eyes were grey. He was a pale, quiet child, with eyes that seemed to listen, and with a full, drooping earlip.

As a rule he seemed old for his years. He was so conscious of what other people felt, particularly his mother. When she fretted he understood, and could have no peace. His soul seemed always attentive to her.

As he grew older he became stronger. William was too removed from him to accept him as a companion. So the smaller boy belonged at first almost entirely to Annie. She was a tom-boy and a "flybie-skybie," as her mother called her. But she was intensely fond of her second brother. So Paul was towed round at the heels of Annie, playing her game. She raced wildly at lerky with the other young wild-cats of the Bottoms. And always Paul was beside her, living her share of the game, having as much part of his own. He was quiet and not noticeable. His sister adored him. He always seemed to care for her if she wanted him to.

Annie had a big doll of which she was fearfully proud, but not so fond. So she laid the doll on the sofa, and went to sleep with an antimacassar, to sleep. Then she forgot all about it. Meantime Paul must practise jumping off the sofa. So he jumped crash into the face of the hidden doll. Annie rushed up, uttered a loud wail, and sat down weeping. Paul remained quite still. "I didn't tell it was there, mother."

tell it was there," he repeated over and over. So long as Annie wept for the doll he sat helpless with misery. Her grief wore itself out. She forgave her brother—he was so much upset. But a day or two afterwards she was shocked.

"Let's make a sacrifice of Arabella," he said. "Let's burn her."

She was horrified, yet rather fascinated. She wanted to see what the boy would do. He made an altar of bricks, pulled some of the shavings out of Arabella's body, put the waxen fragments into the hollow face, poured on a little paraffin, and set the whole thing alight. He watched with wicked satisfaction the drops of wax melt off the broken forehead of Arabella, and drop like sweat into the flame. So long as the stupid big doll burned he rejoiced in silence. At the end he poked among the embers with a stick, fished out the arms and legs, all blackened, and smashed them under stones.

"That's the sacrifice of Missis Arabella," he said. "An' I'm glad there's nothing left of her."

Which disturbed Annie inwardly, although she could say nothing. He seemed to hate the doll so intensely, because he had broken it.

All the children, but particularly Paul, were peculiarly *against* their father, along with their mother. Morel continued to bully and to drink. He had periods, months at a time, when he made the whole life of the family a misery. Paul never forgot coming home from the Band of Hope one Monday evening and finding his mother with her eye swollen and discoloured, his father standing on the hearth-rug, feet astride, his head down, and William, just home from work, glaring at his father. There was a silence as the young children entered, but none of the elders looked round.

William was white to the lips, and his fists were clenched. He waited until the children were silent, watching with children's rage and hate; then he said:

"*You coward, you dare n't do it when I was in.*"

But Morel's blood was up. He swung round on his son. William was bigger, but Morel was hard-muscled, and mad with fury.

"Doss n't I?" he shouted. "Doss n't I? Ha'e much ore o' thy chelp, my young jockey, an' I'll rattle my fist about thee. Ay, an' I sholl that, dost see."

Morel crouched at the knees and showed his fist in an ugly, almost beast-like fashion. William was white with rage.

"Will yer?" he said, quiet and intense. "It 'ud be the last time, though."

Morel danced a little nearer, crouching, drawing back his fist to strike. William put his fists ready. A light came into his blue eyes, almost like a laugh. He watched his father. Another word, and the men would have begun to fight. Paul hoped they would. The three children sat pale on the sofa.

"Stop it, both of you," cried Mrs. Morel in a hard voice. "We've had enough for *one* night. And *you*," she said, turning on to her husband, "look at your children!"

Morel glanced at the sofa.

"Look at the children, you nasty little bitch!" he snarled. "Why, what have *I* done to the children, I would like to know? But they're like yourself; you've turned 'em up to your own tricks and nasty ways — you've ruined 'em in it, you 'ave."

He refused to answer him. No one spoke. After a while he threw his boots under the table and went to bed. "Why did n't you let me have a go at him?" said William, when his father was upstairs. "I could easily beaten him."

"nice thing — your own father," she replied.

"*Father!*!" repeated William. "Call *him* my father!"

"Well, he is — and so —"

"But why don't you let me settle him? I could do,

"*idea!*" she cried. "It has n't —

"No," he said, "it's come to worse. Look at your *Why* did n't you let me give it him?"

"Because I could n't bear it, so never think of it," cried quickly.

And the children went to bed, miserably.

When William was growing up, the family moved from the Bottoms to a house on the brow of the hill, commanding a view of the valley, which spread out like a cockle-shell, or a clamp-shell, before it. In front of the house was a huge old ash-tree. The west wind, sweeping from Derbyshire, caught the houses with full force, and the tree shrieked again. Morel liked it.

"It's music," he said. "It sends me to sleep."

But Paul and Arthur and Annie hated it. To Paul became almost a demonic noise. The winter of the first year in the new house their father was very ill. The children played in the street, on the brim of the wide, dark valley, until eight o'clock. Then they went to bed. Their mother sat sewing below. Having such great space in front of the house gave the children a feeling of night, of vastness, and of terror. This terror came in from the shrieking of the tree and the anguish of home discord. Often Paul would wake up, after he had been asleep a long time, aware of thuds downstairs. Suddenly he was wide awake. Then he heard the boom shouts of his father, come home nearly drunk, then sharp replies of his mother, then the bang, bang of father's fist on the table, and the nasty snarling shudders as the man's voice got higher. And then the whole house drowned in a piercing medley of shrieks and cries from the great, wind-swept ash-tree. The children lay silent in suspense, waiting for a lull in the wind to hear what the father was doing. He might hit their mother again. There was a feeling of horror, a kind of bristling in darkness, and a sense of blood. They lay with their heads in the grip of an intense anguish. The wind came through the tree fiercer and fiercer. All the cords of the great heart hummed, whistled, and shrieked. And then came

the sudden silence, silence everywhere, outside and  
airs. What was it? Was it a silence of blood?  
had he done?

children lay and breathed the darkness. And then,  
, they heard their father throw down his boots and  
upstairs in his stockinginged feet. Still they listened.  
. At last, if the wind allowed, they heard the water of  
drumming into the kettle, which their mother was  
for morning, and they could go to sleep in peace.  
they were happy in the morning — happy, very  
playing, dancing at night round the lonely lamp  
in the midst of the darkness. But they had one  
place of anxiety in their hearts, one darkness in  
yes, which showed all their lives.

I hated his father. As a boy he had a fervent  
religion.

ake him stop drinking," he prayed every night.  
, let my father die," he prayed very often. "Let  
t be killed at pit," he prayed when, after tea, the  
did not come home from work.

t was another time when the family suffered in-  
. The children came from school and had their  
On the hob the big black saucepan was simmering,  
w-jar was in the oven, ready for Morel's dinner.  
expected at five o'clock. But for months he would  
nd drink every night on his way from work.

he winter nights, when it was cold, and grew dark  
Mrs. Morel would put a brass candlestick on the  
ight a tallow candle to save the gas. The children  
l their bread-and-butter, or dripping, and were  
to go out to play. But if Morel had not come  
ltered. The sense of his sitting in all his pit-dirt,  
g, after a long day's work, not coming home and  
and washing, but sitting, getting drunk, on an  
stomach, made Mrs. Morel unable to bear herself.  
ier the feeling was transmitted to the other chil-  
She never suffered alone any more: the children  
I with her.

Paul went out to play with the rest. Down in great trough of twilight, tiny clusters of lights burn where the pits were. A few last colliers straggled the dim field-path. The lamplighter came along. more colliers came. Darkness shut down over the valley work was gone. It was night.

Then Paul ran anxiously into the kitchen. The candle still burned on the table, the big fire glowed. Mrs. Morel sat alone. On the hob the saucepan steamed the dinner-plate lay waiting on the table. All the room was full of the sense of waiting, waiting for the man who was sitting in his pit-dirt, dinnerless, some mile away from home, across the darkness, drinking himself drunk. Paul stood in the doorway.

"Has my dad come?" he asked.

"You can see he has n't," said Mrs. Morel, crossly, without the futility of the question.

Then the boy dawdled about near his mother. They shared the same anxiety. Presently Mrs. Morel went and strained the potatoes.

"They're ruined and black," she said; "but what I care?"

Not many words were spoken. Paul almost hated his mother for suffering because his father did not come home from work.

"What do you bother yourself for?" he said. "If he wants to stop and get drunk, why don't you let him?"

"Let him!" flashed Mrs. Morel. "You may well let him."

She knew that the man who stops on the way home from work is on a quick way to ruining himself and his home. The children were yet young, and depended on him as breadwinner. William gave her the sense of relief, providing her at last with someone to turn to if Morel failed. But the tense atmosphere of the room on these waiting evenings was the same.

The minutes ticked away. At six o'clock still the candle lay on the table, still the dinner stood waiting, still

the sense of anxiety and expectation in the room. The lad could not stand it any longer. He could not go out to play. So he ran in to Mrs. Inger, next door but one, her to talk to him. She had no children. Her husband was good to her, but was in a shop, and came home

So, when she saw the lad at the door, she called: "Come in, Paul."

he two sat talking for some time, when suddenly the rose, saying:

"Well, I 'll be going and seeing if my mother wants anything doing."

He pretended to be perfectly cheerful, and did not tell his friend what ailed him. Then he ran indoors.

Morel at these times came in churlish and hateful.

"This is a nice time to come home," said Mrs. Morel. "What's it matter to yo' what time I come whoam?" he shouted.

And everybody in the house was still, because he was dangerous. He ate his food in the most brutal manner possible, and, when he had done, pushed all the pots and pans away from him, to lay his arms on the table. Then he went to sleep.

Paul hated his father so. The collier's small, mean face, with its black hair slightly soiled with grey, lay with bare arms, and the face, dirty and inflamed, with fleshy nose and thin, paltry brows, was turned sideways, asleep with beer and weariness and nasty temper. Anyone entered suddenly, or a noise were made, the collier looked up and shouted:

"I 'll lay my fist about thy y'ead, I 'm tellin' thee, if you doesn't stop that clatter! Dost hear?"

And the two last words, shouted in a bullying fashion, directly at Annie, made the family writhe with hate of the

collier. He was shut out from all family affairs. No one told anything. The children, alone with their mother, told all about the day's happenings, everything. Nothing really taken place in them until it was told to their

mother. But as soon as the father came in, everything stopped. He was like the scotch in the smooth, happy machinery of the home. And he was always aware of this fall of silence on his entry, the shutting off of life, the unwelcome. But now it was gone too far to alter.

He would dearly have liked the children to talk to him but they could not. Sometimes Mrs. Morel would say:

"You ought to tell your father."

Paul won a prize in a competition in a child's paper. Everybody was highly jubilant.

"Now you'd better tell your father when he comes in," said Mrs. Morel. "You know how he carries on and says he's never told anything."

"All right," said Paul. But he would almost rather have forfeited the prize than have to tell his father.

"I've won a prize in a competition, dad," he said.

Morel turned round to him.

"Have you, my boy? What sort of a competition?"

"Oh, nothing — about famous women."

"And how much is the prize, then, as you've got?"

"It's a book."

"Oh, indeed!"

"About birds."

"Hm — hm!"

And that was all. Conversation was impossible between the father and any other member of the family. He was an outsider. He had denied the God in him.

The only times when he entered again into the life of his own people was when he worked, and was happy at work. Sometimes, in the evening, he cobbled the boots or mended the kettle or his pit-bottle. Then he always wanted several attendants, and the children enjoyed it. They united with him in the work, in the actual doing of something, when he was his real self again.

He was a good workman, dexterous, and one who, when he was in a good humour, always sang. He had w<sup>h</sup> periods, months, almost years, of friction and nasty t<sup>h</sup>per. Then sometimes he was jolly again. It was nice

ee him run with a piece of red-hot iron into the scullery, trying:

“Out of my road — out of my road!”

Then he hammered the soft, red-glowing stuff on his iron goose, and made the shape he wanted. Or he sat absorbed for a moment, soldering. Then the children watched with joy as the metal sank suddenly molten, and was shoved about against the nose of the soldering-iron, while the room was full of a scent of burnt resin and hot tin, and Morel was silent and intent for a minute. He always sang when he mended boots because of the jolly sound of hammering. And he was rather happy when he sat putting great patches on his moleskin pit trousers, which he would often do, considering them too dirty, and the stuff too hard, for his wife to mend.

But the best time for the young children was when he made fuses. Morel fetched a sheaf of long sound wheat-straws from the attic. These he cleaned with his hand, till each one gleamed like a stalk of gold, after which he cut the straws into lengths of about six inches, leaving, if he could, a notch at the bottom of each piece. He always had a beautifully sharp knife that could cut a straw clean without hurting it. Then he set in the middle of the table a heap of gunpowder, a little pile of black grains upon the white-scrubbed board. He made and trimmed the straws while Paul and Annie filled and plugged them. Paul loved to see the black grains trickle down a crack in his palm into the mouth of the straw, peppering jollily downwards till the straw was full. Then he bunged up the mouth with a bit of soap — which he got on his thumb-nail from a pat in a saucer — and the straw was finished.

“Look, dad!” he said.

“That’s right, my beauty,” replied Morel, who was peculiarly lavish of endearments to his second son. Paul popped the fuse into the powder-tin, ready for the morning, when Morel would take it to the pit, and use it to fire a shot that would blast the coal down.

thud on the ironing-board. Once roused, he opened his eyes to see his mother standing on the hearthrug with the hot iron near her cheek, listening, as it were, to the heat. Her still face, with the mouth closed tight from suffering and disillusion and self-denial, and her nose the smallest bit on one side, and her blue eyes so young, quick, and warm, made his heart contract with love. When she was quiet, so, she looked brave and rich with life, but as if she had been done out of her rights. It ~~hurt the boy~~ keenly, this feeling about her that she had never had her life's fulfilment: and his own incapability to make up to her hurt him with a sense of impotence, yet made him patiently dogged inside. It was his childish aim.

She spat on the iron, and a little ball of spit bounded, raced off the dark, glossy surface. Then, kneeling, she rubbed the iron on the sack lining of the hearthrug vigorously. She was warm in the ruddy firelight. Paul loved the way she crouched and put her head on one side. Her movements were light and quick. It was always a pleasure to watch her. Nothing she ever did, no movement she ever made, could have been found fault with by her children. The room was warm and full of the scent of hot linen. Later on the clergyman came and talked softly with her.

Paul was laid up with an attack of bronchitis. He did not mind much. What happened happened, and it was no good kicking against the pricks. He loved the evenings, after eight o'clock, when the light was put out, and he could watch the fire-flames spring over the darkness of the walls and ceiling; could watch huge shadows waving and tossing, till the room seemed full of men who battled silently.

On retiring to bed, the father would come into the sick-room. He was always very gentle if anyone were ill. But he disturbed the atmosphere for the boy.

"Are ter asleep, my darlin'?" Morel asked softly.

"No; is my mother comin'?"

"She 's just finishin' foldin' the clothes. Do you want nything?" Morel rarely "thee'd" his son.

"I don't want nothing. But how long will she be?"

"Not long, my Jickie."

The father waited undecidedly on the hearthrug for a moment or two. He felt his son did not want him. Then he went to the top of the stairs and said to his wife:

"This childt's axin' for thee; how long art goin' to be?"

"Until I've finished, good gracious! Tell him to go to sleep."

"She says you're to go to sleep," the father repeated gently to Paul.

"Well, I want *her* to come," insisted the boy.

"He says he can't go off till you come," Morel called downstairs.

"Eh, dear! I shan't be long. And do stop shouting downstairs. There's the other children —"

Then Morel came again, and crouched before the bedroom fire. He loved a fire dearly.

"She says she won't be long," he said.

He loitered about indefinitely. The boy began to get feverish with irritation. His father's presence seemed to aggravate all his sick impatience. At last Morel, after having stood looking at his son awhile, said softly:

"Good-night, my darling."

"Good-night," Paul replied, turning round in relief to be alone.

Paul loved to sleep with his mother. Sleep is still most perfect, in spite of hygienists, when it is shared with a beloved. The warmth, the security and peace of soul, the utter comfort from the touch of the other, knits the sleep, so that it takes the body and soul completely in its healing. Paul lay against her and slept, and got better; whilst she, always a bad sleeper, fell later on into a profound sleep that seemed to give her faith.

In convalescence he would sit up in bed, see the fluffy horses feeding at the troughs in the field, scattering their hay on the trodden yellow snow; watch the miners tramp home — small, black figures trailing slowly in gangs across

the white field. Then the night came up in dark vapour from the snow.

In convalescence everything was wonderful. The flakes, suddenly arriving on the window-pane, clung a moment like swallows, then were gone, and a drop of water was crawling down the glass. The snowflakes whirled round the corner of the house, like pigeons dancing by. Away across the valley the little black things crawled doubtfully over the great whiteness.

While they were so poor, the children were delighted if they could do anything to help economically. And Paul and Arthur went out early in the morning in summer, looking for mushrooms, hunting through the grass, from which the larks were rising, for the white skinned, wonderful naked bodies crouched secretly in the green. And if they got half a pound they felt exceedingly happy: there was the joy of finding something, the joy of accepting something straight from the hand of Nature, and the joy of contributing to the family exchequer.

But the most important harvest, after gleaning frumenty, was the blackberries. Mrs. Morel must have fruit for puddings on the Saturdays; also she liked blackberries. So Paul and Arthur scoured the coppices and woods and old quarries, so long as a blackberry could be found, every week-end going on their search. In that region of mining villages blackberries became a comparative rarity. But Paul hunted far and wide. He loved being out in the country, among the bushes. He also could not bear to go home to his mother empty-handed. That, he felt, would disappoint her, and he would have died rather.

"Good gracious!" she would exclaim as the lads came in, late, and tired to death, and hungry, "wherever have you been?"

"Well," replied Paul, "there was n't any, so we went over Misk Hills. And look here, our mother!"

*She peeped into the basket.*

"Now, those are fine ones!" she exclaimed.

"And there's over two pounds — is n't there over two pounds?"

She tried the basket.

"Yes," she answered doubtfully.

Then Paul fished out a little spray. He always brought her one spray, the best he could find.

"Pretty!" she said, in a curious tone, of a woman accepting a love-token.

The boy walked all day, went miles and miles, rather than own himself beaten and come home to her empty-handed. She never realized this, whilst he was young. She was a woman who waited for her children to grow up. And William occupied her chiefly.

But when William went to Nottingham, and was not so much at home, the mother made a companion of Paul. The latter was unconsciously jealous of his brother, and William was jealous of him. At the same time, they were good friends.

Mrs. Morel's intimacy with her second son was more subtle and fine, perhaps not so passionate as with her eldest. It was the rule that Paul should fetch the money on Friday afternoons. The colliers of the five pits were paid on Fridays, but not individually. All the earnings of each stall were put down to the chief butty, as contractor, and he divided the wages again, either in the public-house or in his own home. So that the children could fetch the money, school closed early on Friday afternoons. Each of the Morel children — William, then Annie, then Paul — had fetched the money on Friday afternoons, until they went themselves to work. Paul used to set off at half-past three, with a little calico bag in his pocket. Down all the paths, women, girls, children, and men were seen trooping to the offices.

These offices were quite handsome: a new, red-brick building, almost like a mansion, standing in its own well-kept grounds at the end of Greenhill Lane. The waiting-room was the hall, a long, bare room paved with blue briq

and having a seat all round, against the wall. Here the colliers in their pit-dirt. They had come up ea The women and children usually loitered about on the gravel paths. Paul always examined the grass bor and the big grass bank, because in it grew tiny par and tiny forget-me-nots. There was a sound of m voices. The women had on their Sunday hats. The g chattered loudly. Little dogs ran here and there. green shrubs were silent all around.

Then from inside came the cry "Spinney Park! Spinney Park." All the folk for Spinney Park trod inside. When it was time for Brettie to be paid, I went in among the crowd. The pay-room was quite sm A counter went across, dividing it into half. Behind counter stood two men — Mr. Braithwaite and his cl Mr. Winterbottom. Mr. Braithwaite was large, somev of the stern patriarch in appearance, having a ra thin white beard. He was usually muffled in an enorm silk neckerchief, and right up to the hot summer a l fire burned in the open grate. No window was o Sometimes in winter the air scorched the throats of people, coming in from the freshness. Mr. Winterbot was rather small and fat, and very bald. He made marks that were not witty, whilst his chief launched fo patriarchal admonitions against the colliers.

The room was crowded with miners in their pit-men who had been home and changed, and women, and or two children, and usually a dog. Paul was quite sm so it was often his fate to be jammed behind the leg the men, near the fire which scorched him. He knew order of the names — they went according to number.

"Holliday," came the ringing voice of Mr. Braithwa Then Mrs. Holliday stepped silently forward, was p drew aside.

"Bower — John Bower."

*A boy stepped to the counter. Mr. Braithwaite, large and irascible, glowered at him over his spectacles,*

John Bower!" he repeated.

"It's me," said the boy.

"Why, you used to 'ave a different nose than that,"  
glossy Mr. Winterbottom, peering over the counter.  
people tittered, thinking of John Bower senior.

"How is it your father's not come?" said Mr. Braithwaite, in a large and magisterial voice.

"He's badly," piped the boy.

"You should tell him to keep off the drink," pronounced great cashier.

"An' niver mind if he puts his foot through yer," said ocking voice from behind.

All the men laughed. The large and important cashier sat down at his next sheet.

"Fred Pilkington!" he called, quite indifferent.

Mr. Braithwaite was an important shareholder in the

aul knew his turn was next but one, and his heart began to beat. He was pushed against the chimney-piece. The calves were burning. But he did not hope to get through the wall of men.

"Walter Morel!" came the ringing voice.

"Here!" piped Paul, small and inadequate.

"Morel — Walter Morel!" the cashier repeated, his finger and thumb on the invoice, ready to pass on.

Paul was suffering convulsions of self-consciousness, could not or would not shout. The backs of the men penetrated him. Then Mr. Winterbottom came to the rescue.

"He's here. Where is he? Morel's lad?"

The fat, red, bald little man peered round with keen eyes. He pointed at the fireplace. The colliers looked round, moved aside, and disclosed the boy.

"Here he is!" said Mr. Winterbottom.

Paul went to the counter.

"Seventeen pounds eleven and fivepence. Why don't you shout up when you're called?" said Mr. Braithwaite. He banged on to the invoice a five-pound bag of silver,

then, in a delicate and pretty movement, picked up a little ten-pound column of gold, and plumped it beside the silver. The gold slid in a bright stream over the paper. The cashier finished counting off the money; the boy dragged the whole down the counter to Mr. Winterbottom, to whom the stoppages for rent and tools must be paid. Here he suffered again.

"Sixteen an' six," said Mr. Winterbottom.

The lad was too much upset to count. He pushed forward some loose silver and half a sovereign.

"How much do you think you've given me?" asked Mr. Winterbottom.

The boy looked at him, but said nothing. He had not the faintest notion.

"Have n't you got a tongue in your head?"

Paul bit his lip, and pushed forward some more silver.

"Don't they teach you to count at the Board-school?" he asked.

"Nowt but Alighbra an' French," said a collier.

"An' cheek an' impudence," said another.

Paul was keeping someone waiting. With trembling fingers he got his money into the bag and slid out. He suffered the tortures of the damned on these occasions.

His relief, when he got outside, and was walking along the Mansfield Road, was infinite. On the park wall the mosses were green. There were some gold and some white fowls pecking under the apple-trees of an orchard. The colliers were walking home in a stream. The boy went near the wall, self-consciously. He knew many of the men, but could not recognize them in their dirt. And this was a new torture to him.

When he got down to the New Inn, at Brettby, his father was not yet come. Mrs. Wharmby, the landlady, knew him. His grandmother, Morel's mother, had been Mrs. Wharmby's friend.

"Your father's not come yet," said the landlady, in a peculiar half-scornful, half-patronizing voice of a woman who talks chiefly to grown men. "Sit you down."

sat down on the edge of the bench in the bar. Olliers were "reckoning"—sharing out their — in a corner; others came in. They all glanced by without speaking. At last Morel came; brisk, h something of an air, even in his blackness. "Lo!" he said rather tenderly to his son. "Have fed me? Shall you have a drink of something?" and all the children were bred up fierce anti-sts; and he would have suffered more in drinking ade before all the men than in having a tooth

landlady looked at him *de haut en bas*, rather and at the same time resenting his clear, fierce r. Paul went home, glowering. He entered the lently. Friday was baking day, and there was a hot bun. His mother put it before him.

only he turned on her in a fury, his eyes flashing: "not going to the office any more," he said. y, what's the matter?" his mother asked in sur- His sudden rages rather amused her.

"not going any more," he declared.

"very well, tell your father so."

ewed his bun as if he hated it.

"not—I'm not going to fetch the money."

"one of Carlin's children can go; they'd be glad of the sixpence," said Mrs. Morel.

sixpence was Paul's only income. It mostly went g birthday presents; but it was an income, and he d it. But —

"you can have it, then!" he said. "I don't want

"very well," said his mother. "But you need n't e about it."

"you're hateful, and common, and hateful, they are, not going any more. Mr. Braithwaite drops his 'Mr. Winterbottom says 'You was.' "

"is that why you won't go any more?" smiled Mrs.

The boy was silent for some time. His face was pale; his eyes dark and furious. His mother moved about her work, taking no notice of him.

"They always stan' in front of me, so's I can't get out," he said.

"Well, my lad, you've only to *ask* them," she replied.

"An' then Alfred Winterbottom says, 'What do they teach you at the Board-school?'"

"They never taught *him* much," said Mrs. Morel, "that is a fact — neither manners nor wit — and his cunning he was born with."

So, in her own way, she soothed him. His ridiculous hypersensitiveness made her heart ache. And sometimes the fury in his eyes roused her, made her sleeping soul lift up its head a moment, surprised.

"What was the cheque?" she asked.

"Seventeen pounds eleven and fivepence, and sixteen and six stoppages," replied the boy. "It's a good week; and only five shillings stoppages for my father."

So she was able to calculate how much her husband had earned, and could call him to account if he gave her short money. Morel always kept to himself the secret of the week's amount.

Friday was the baking night and market night. It was the rule that Paul should stay at home and bake. He loved to stop in and draw or read; he was very fond of drawing. Annie always "gallivanted" on Friday nights. Arthur was enjoying himself as usual. So the boy remained alone.

Mrs. Morel loved her marketing. In the tiny market-place on the top of the hill, where four roads, from Nottingham and Derby, Ilkeston and Mansfield, met, many stalls were erected. Brakes ran in from surrounding villages. The market-place was full of women, the streets packed with men. It was amazing to see so many men everywhere in the streets. Mrs. Morel usually quarrelled with her lace woman, sympathized with her fruit man — who was a gabey, but his wife was a bad un — laugh-

the fish man — who was a scamp but so droll — put oleum man in his place, was cold with the odd-man, and only went to the crockery man when s driven — or drawn by the cornflowers on a little then she was coldly polite.

"wondered how much that little dish was," she said.  
venpence to you."

"ank you."

put the dish down and walked away; but she could ave the market-place without it. Again she went re the pots lay coldly on the floor, and she glanced dish furtively, pretending not to.

was a little woman, in a bonnet and a black cos-  
Her bonnet was in its third year; it was a great ice to Annie.

other!" the girl implored, " don't wear that nubbly onnet."

"en what else shall I wear?" replied the mother  
" And I'm sure it's right enough."

ad started with a tip; then had had flowers; now duced to black lace and a bit of jet.

looks rather come down," said Paul. " Could n't ve it a pick-me-up? "

I jowl your head for impudence," said Mrs. Morel,  
e tied the strings of the black bonnet valiantly her chin.

glanced at the dish again. Both she and her the pot man, had an uncomfortable feeling, as if ere something between them. Suddenly he shouted: "you want it for fivepence? "

started. Her heart hardened; but then she stooped up the dish.

I have it," she said.

r 'll do me the favour, like? " he said. " Yer 'd bet-  
t in it, like yer do when y'ave something give yer."

Morel paid him the fivepence in a cold manner.

on't see you give it me," she said. " You would n't have it for fivepence if you did n't want to."

"In this flamin', scrattlin' place you may count lucky if you can give your things away," he growl

"Yes; there are bad times, and good," said Mrs.

But she had forgiven the pot man. They were She dare now finger his pots. So she was happy.

Paul was waiting for her. He loved her home— She was always her best so — triumphant, tired with parcels, feeling rich in spirit. He heard her light step in the entry and looked up from his d

"Oh!" she sighed, smiling at him from the doory

"My word, you *are* loaded!" he exclaimed, down his brush.

"I am!" she gasped. "That brazen Annie said meet me. *Such a weight!*"

She dropped her string bag and her packages table.

"Is the bread done?" she asked, going to the

"The last one is soaking," he replied. "You look, I've not forgotten it."

"Oh, that pot man!" she said, closing the oven. "You know what a wretch I've said he was? I don't think he's quite so bad."

"Don't you?"

The boy was attentive to her. She took off her black bonnet.

"No. I think he can't make any money — with everybody's cry alike nowadays — and it makes him agreeable."

"It would *me*," said Paul.

"Well, one can't wonder at it. And he let me know how much do you think he let me have *this* for?"

She took the dish out of its rag of newspaper, and looking on it with joy.

"Show me!" said Paul.

The two stood together gloating over the dish.

"I *love* cornflowers on things," said Paul.

"Yes, and I thought of the teapot you bought me."

"One and three," said Paul.

"Fivepence!"

"It's not enough, mother."

"No. Do you know, I fairly sneaked off with it. But I'd been extravagant, I couldn't afford any more. And I need n't have let me have it if he had n't wanted to."

"No, he need n't, need he?" said Paul, and the two comforted each other from the fear of having robbed the old man.

"We c'n have stewed fruit in it," said Paul.

"Or custard, or a jelly," said his mother.

"Or radishes and lettuce," said he.

"Don't forget that bread," she said, her voice bright with glee.

Paul looked in the oven; tapped the loaf on the base.

"It's done," he said, giving it to her.

She tapped it also.

"Yes," she replied, going to unpack her bag. "Oh, and I'm a wicked, extravagant woman. I know I s'll come to ant."

He hopped to her side eagerly, to see her latest extravagance. She unfolded another lump of newspaper and disclosed some roots of pansies and of crimson daisies.

"Four penn'orth!" she moaned.

"How cheap!" he cried.

"Yes, but I could n't afford it *this week* of all weeks."

"But lovely!" he cried.

"Are n't they!" she exclaimed, giving way to pure joy. Paul, look at this yellow one, is n't it — and a face just like an old man!"

"Just!" cried Paul, stooping to sniff. "And smells sat nice! But he's a bit splashed."

He ran in the scullery, came back with the flannel, and carefully washed the pansy.

"Now look at him now he's wet!" he said.

"Yes!" she exclaimed, brimful of satisfaction.

The children of Scargill Street felt quite select. At the end where the Morels lived there were not many young things. So the few were more united. Boys and girls

played together, the girls joining in the fights and the rough games, the boys taking part in the dancing games and rings and make-belief of the girls.

Annie and Paul and Arthur loved the winter evening when it was not wet. They stayed indoors till the colliers were all gone home, till it was thick dark, and the street would be deserted. Then they tied their scarves round their necks, for they scorned overcoats, as all the collier children did, and went out. The entry was very dark, and at the end the whole great night opened out, in a hollow with a little tangle of lights below where Minton pit lay, and another far away opposite for Selby. The farthest tiny lights seemed to stretch out the darkness for ever. The children looked anxiously down the road at the one lamp-post, which stood at the end of the field path. In the little, luminous space were deserted, the two boys felt genuine desolation. They stood with their hands in their pockets under the lamp, turning their backs on the night, quite miserable, watching the dark houses. Suddenly a pinafore under a short coat was seen, and a long-legged girl came flying up.

"Where's Billy Pillins an' your Annie an' Eddie Dakin?"

"I don't know."

But it did not matter so much — there were three now. They set up a game round the lamp-post, till the others rushed up, yelling. Then the play went fast and furious.

There was only this one lamp-post. Behind was the great scoop of darkness, as if all the night were there. In front, another wide, dark way opened over the hill-brow. Occasionally somebody came out of this way and went into the field down the path. In a dozen yards the night had swallowed them. The children played on.

They were brought exceedingly close together, owing to their isolation. If a quarrel took place, the whole <sup>flat</sup> ~~was spoilt~~. Arthur was very touchy, and Billy Phillips — was worse. Then Paul had to side with

r, and on Paul's side went Alice, while Billy Pillins had Emmie Limb and Eddie Dakin to back him. Then the six would fight, hate with a fury of hatred, at home in terror. Paul never forgot, after one of fierce internecine fights, seeing a big red moon lift up, slowly, between the waste road over the hill-top, like a great bird. And he thought of the Bible, the moon should be turned to blood. And the next day made haste to be friends with Billy Pillins. And the wild, intense games went on again under the moon, surrounded by so much darkness. Mrs. Morel, into her parlour, would hear the children singing

"My shoes are made of Spanish leather,  
My socks are made of silk;  
I wear a ring on every finger,  
I wash myself in milk."

y sounded so perfectly absorbed in the game as voices came out of the night, that they had the feel of creatures singing. It stirred the mother; and understood when they came in at eight o'clock, ruddy, brilliant eyes, and quick, passionate speech.

y all loved the Scargill Street house for its open-air for the great scallop of the world it had in view. Summer evenings the women would stand against the fence, gossiping, facing the west, watching the sun-set quickly out, till the Derbyshire hills ridged the crimson far away, like the black crest of a

his summer season the pits never turned full time, ularly the soft coal. Mrs. Dakin, who lived next to Mrs. Morel, going to the field fence to shake her rug, would spy men coming slowly up the hill. Now at once they were colliers. Then she waited, a thin shrew-faced woman, standing on the hill brow, like a menace to the poor colliers who were toiling. It was only eleven o'clock. From the far-off wooded haze that hangs like fine black crape at the back

of a summer morning had not yet dissipated. The first man came to the stile. "Chock-chock!" went the gate under his thrust.

"What, han' yer knocked off?" cried Mrs. Dakin.

"We han, missis."

"It's a pity as they letn yer goo," she said sarcastically.

"It is that," replied the man.

"Nay, you know you're flig to come up again," she said.

And the man went on. Mrs. Dakin, going up her yard spied Mrs. Morel taking the ashes to the ash-pit.

"I reckon Minton's knocked off, missis," she cried.

"Is n't it sickenin'!" exclaimed Mrs. Morel in wrath.

"Ha! But I'n just seed Jont Hutchby."

"They might as well have saved their shoe-leather," said Mrs. Morel. And both women went indoors, disgusted.

The colliers, their faces scarcely blackened, were trooping home again. Morel hated to go back. He loved the sunny morning. But he had gone to pit to work, and to be sent home again spoilt his temper.

"Good gracious, at this time!" exclaimed his wife, as he entered.

"Can I help it, woman?" he shouted.

"And I've not done half enough dinner."

"Then I'll eat my bit o' snap as I took with me," he bawled pathetically. He felt ignominious and sore.

And the children, coming home from school, would wonder to see their father eating with his dinner the two thick slices of rather dry and dirty bread-and-butter that had been to pit and back.

"What's my dad eating his snap for now?" asked Arthur.

"I should ha'e it holled at me if I didna," snorted Morel.

"What a story!" exclaimed his wife.

"An' is it goin' to be wasted?" said Morel. "I

not such a extravagant mortal as you lot, with your waste. If I drop a bit of bread at pit, in all the dust an' dirt, I pick it up an' eat it."

"The mice would eat it," said Paul. "It would n't be wasted."

"Good bread-an'-butter's not for mice, either," said Morel. "Dirty or not dirty, I'd eat it rather than it should be wasted."

"You might leave it for the mice and pay for it out of your next pint," said Mrs. Morel.

"Oh, might I?" he exclaimed.

They were very poor that autumn. William had just gone away to London, and his mother missed his money. He sent ten shillings once or twice, but he had many things to pay for at first. His letters came regularly once a week. He wrote a good deal to his mother, telling her all his life, how he made friends, and was exchanging lessons with a Frenchman, how he enjoyed London. His mother felt again he was remaining to her just as when he was at home. She wrote to him every week her direct, rather witty letters. All day long, as she cleaned the house, she thought of him. He was in London: he would do well. Almost, he was like her knight who wore her favour in the battle.

He was coming at Christmas for five days. There had never been such preparations. Paul and Arthur scoured the land for holly and evergreens. Annie made the pretty paper hoops in the old-fashioned way. And there was unheard-of extravagance in the larder. Mrs. Morel made a big and magnificent cake. Then, feeling queenly, she showed Paul how to blanch almonds. He skinned the long nuts reverently, counting them all, to see not one was lost. It was said that eggs whisked better in a cold place. So the boy stood in the scullery, where the temperature was nearly at freezing-point, and whisked and whisked, and grew in excitement to his mother as the white of egg grew

more and more snowy.

Just look, mother! Is n't it lovely?"

And he balanced a bit on his nose, then blew it in the air.

"Now, don't waste it," said the mother.

Everybody was mad with excitement. William was coming on Christmas Eve. Mrs. Morel surveyed her panting. There was a big plum cake, and a rice cake, jam tarts, lemon tarts, and mince-pies — two enormous dishes. She was finishing cooking — Spanish tarts and cheese-cakes. Everywhere was decorated. The kissing-bunch of berries holly hung with bright and glittering things, spun slowly over Mrs. Morel's head as she trimmed her little tree in the kitchen. A great fire roared. There was a scene of cooked pastry. He was due at seven o'clock, but would be late. The three children had gone to meet him. She was alone. But at a quarter to seven Morel came in again. Neither wife nor husband spoke. He sat in an armchair, quite awkward with excitement, and she quietly went on with her baking. Only by the careful way which she did things could it be told how much moved her. The clock ticked on.

"What time dost say he's coming?" Morel asked for the fifth time.

"The train gets in at half-past six," she replied emphatically.

"Then he'll be here at ten past seven."

"Eh, bless you, it'll be hours late on the Midland," she said indifferently. But she hoped, by expecting him late, to bring him early. Morel went down the entry to look for him. Then he came back.

"Goodness, man!" she said. "You're like an ill-sitting hen."

"Hadna you better be gettin' him summat to eat ready?" asked the father.

"There's plenty of time," she answered.

"There's not so much as I can see on," he answered, turning crossly in his chair. She began to clear the table. The kettle was singing. They waited and waited. Meantime the three children were on the platform

Sethley Bridge, on the Midland main line, two miles from home. They waited one hour. A train came—he was not there. Down the line the red and green lights shone. It was very dark and very cold.

"Ask him if the London train's come," said Paul to Annie, when they saw a man in a tip cap.

"I'm not," said Annie. "You be quiet—he might send us off."

But Paul was dying for the man to know they were expecting someone by the London train: it sounded so grand. Yet he was much too much scared of broaching any man, let alone one in a peaked cap, to dare to ask. The three children could scarcely go into the waiting-room for fear of being sent away, and for fear something should happen whilst they were off the platform. Still they waited in the dark and cold.

"It's an hour an' a half late," said Arthur pathetically.

"Well," said Annie, "it's Christmas Eve."

They all grew silent. He was n't coming. They looked down the darkness of the railway. There was London! It seemed the uttermost of distance. They thought anything might happen if one came from London. They were all too troubled to talk. Cold, and unhappy, and silent, they huddled together on the platform.

At last, after more than two hours, they saw the lights of an engine peering round, away down the darkness. A porter ran out. The children drew back with beating hearts. A great train, bound for Manchester, drew up. Two doors opened, and from one of them, William. They flew to him. He handed parcels to them cheerily, and immediately began to explain that this great train had stopped for his sake at such a small station as Sethley Bridge: it was not booked to stop.

Meanwhile the parents were getting anxious. The table was set, the chop was cooked, everything was ready. Mrs. rel put on her black apron. She was wearing her best dress. Then she sat, pretending to read. The minutes were a torture to her.

"H'm!" said Morel. "It's an hour an': a ha'ef."

"And those children waiting!" she said.

"Th' train canna ha' come in 'til?" he said.

"I tell you, on Christmas Eve they're *hours* wrong."

They were both a bit cross with each other, so gnawed with anxiety. The ash-tree moaned outside in a cold, raw wind. And all that space of night from London home! Mrs. Morel suffered. The slight click of the works inside the clock irritated her. It was getting so late; it was getting unbearable.

At last there was a sound of voices, and a footstep in the entry.

"Ha's here!" cried Morel, jumping up.

Then he stood back. The mother ran a few steps towards the door and waited. There was a rush and a patter of feet, the door burst open. William was there. He dropped his Gladstone bag and took his mother in his arms.

"Mater!" he said.

"My boy!" she cried.

And for two seconds, no longer, she clasped him and kissed him. Then she withdrew and said, trying to be quite normal:

"But how late you are!"

"Are n't I!" he cried turning to his father. "Well dad!"

The two men shook hands.

"Well, my lad!"

Morel's eyes were wet.

"We thought tha'd niver be commin'," he said.

"Oh, I'd come!" exclaimed William.

Then the son turned round to his mother.

"But you look well," she said proudly, laughing.

"Well!" he exclaimed. "I should think so — com home!"

He was a fine fellow, big, straight, and fearless-loo! *He looked round at the evergreens and the kissing b*  
*and the little tarts that lay in their tins on the heart*

"By jove! mother, it's not different!" he said, as if relief.

Everybody was still for a second. Then he suddenly sprang forward, picked a tart from the hearth, and pushed it into his mouth.

"Well, did ever you see such a parish oven!" the father claimed.

He had brought them endless presents. Every penny he had spent on them. There was a sense of luxury overflowing in the house. For his mother there was an umbrella with gold on the pale handle. She kept it to her dying day, and would have lost anything rather than that. Everybody had something gorgeous, and besides, there were pounds of unknown sweets: Turkish delight, crystallized pineapple, and such-like things which, the children thought, only the splendour of London could provide. Paul boasted of these sweets among his friends.

"Real pineapple, cut off in slices, and then turned into stalk — fair grand!"

Everybody was mad with happiness in the family. He was home, and they loved it with a passion of love, however the suffering had been. There were parties, there were rejoicings. People came in to see William, to see what difference London had made to him. And they all said him "such a gentleman, and such a fine fellow, my lad!"

When he went away again the children retired to various places to weep alone. Morel went to bed in misery, Mrs. Morel felt as if she were numbed by something, as if her feelings were paralyzed. She loved him passionately.

He was in the office of a lawyer connected with a large shipping firm, and at the midsummer his chief offered him a trip in the Mediterranean on one of the boats, for quite a small cost. Mrs. Morel wrote: "Go, go, my boy. You will never have a chance again, and I should love to think you cruising there in the Mediterranean almost half — ~~a~~ to have you at home." But William came back

his fortnight's holiday. Not even the Mediterranean, which pulled at all his young man's desire to travel, and at his poor man's wonder at the glamorous south, could take him away when he might come home. That compensated his mother for much.

## CHAPTER V

### PAUL LAUNCHES INTO LIFE

MOREL was rather a heedless man, careless of danger.

So he had endless accidents. Now, when Mrs. Morel  
the rattle of an empty coal-cart cease at her entry—  
she ran into the parlour to look, expecting almost  
her husband seated in the waggon, his face grey  
his dirt, his body limp and sick with some hurt or  
. If it were he, she would run out to help.

out a year after William went to London, and just  
Paul had left school, before he got work, Mrs. Morel  
upstairs and her son was painting in the kitchen —  
as very clever with his brush — when there came a  
at the door. Crossly he put down his brush to go.  
the same moment his mother opened a window upstairs  
ooked down.

pit-lad in his dirt stood on the threshold.

"Is this Walter Morel's?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mrs. Morel. "What is it?"  
it she had guessed already.

"Your mester's got hurt," he said.

"Eh, dear me!" she exclaimed. "It's a wonder if he  
't, lad. And what's he done this time?"

I don't know for sure, but it's 'is leg somewhere.  
ta'ein' 'im ter th' 'ospital."

"Good gracious me!" she exclaimed. "Eh, dear, what  
he is! There's not five minutes of peace, I'll be  
ed if there is! His thumb's nearly better, and now —  
you see him?"

seed him at th' bottom. An' I seed 'em bring 'im  
a tub, an' 'e wor in a dead faint. But he shouted  
nythink when Doctor Fraser examined him i' th'

cabin — an' cossed an' swore, an' said as 'e wor goin' be ta'en whoam — 'e wor n't goin' ter th' 'ospital."

The boy faltered to an end.

"He *would* want to come home, so that I can have the bother. Thank you, my lad. Eh, dear, if I'm not s — sick and surfeited, I am!"

She came downstairs. Paul had mechanically resum his painting.

"And it must be pretty bad if they've taken him the hospital," she went on. "But what a *careless* creat he is! *Other* men don't have all these accidents. Yes, *would* want to put all the burden on me. Eh, dear, ju as we *were* getting easy a bit at last. Put those thin away, there's no time to be painting now. What time there a train? I know I s'll have to go trailing to Kest I s'll have to leave that bedroom."

"I can finish it," said Paul.

"You need n't. I shall catch the seven o'clock ba I should think. Oh, my blessed heart, the fuss and co motion he'll make! And those granite setts at Tinc Hill — he might well call them kidney pebbles — they jolt him almost to bits. I wonder why they can't me them, the state they're in, an' all the men as go acr in that ambulance. You'd think they'd have a hosp here. The men bought the ground, and, my sirs, there be accidents enough to keep it going. But no, they m trail them ten miles in a slow ambulance to Nottingha It's a crying shame! Oh, and the fuss he'll make! know he will! I wonder who's with him. Barker, I think. Poor beggar, he'll wish himself anywhere rath But he'll look after him, I know. Now there's no telli how long he'll be stuck in that hospital — and *won't* hate it! But if it's only his leg it's not so bad."

All the time she was getting ready. Hurriedly tak off her bodice, she crouched at the boiler while the wa ran slowly into her lading-can.

"*I wish this boiler was at the bottom of the sea!*" s *exclaimed*, wriggling the handle impatiently. She h

ery handsome, strong arms, rather surprising on a smallish woman.

Paul cleared away, put on the kettle, and set the table. "There is n't a train till four-twenty," he said. You've time enough."

"Oh no, I have n't!" she cried, blinking at him over the towel as she wiped her face.

"Yes, you have. You must drink a cup of tea at any rate. Should I come with you to Keston?"

"Come with me? What for, I should like to know? Now, what have I to take him? Eh, dear! His clean shirt — and it's a blessing it *is* clean. But it had better be aired. And stockings — he won't want them — and aowel, I suppose; and handkerchiefs. Now what else?"

"A comb, a knife and fork and spoon," said Paul. His mother had been in the hospital before.

"Goodness knows what sort of state his feet were in," continued Mrs. Morel, as she combed her long brown hair, that was fine as silk, and was touched now with grey. He's very particular to wash himself to the waist, but below he thinks does n't matter. But there, I suppose they see plenty like it."

Paul had laid the table. He cut his mother one or two pieces of very thin bread-and-butter.

"Here you are," he said, putting her cup of tea in her lace.

"I can't be bothered!" she exclaimed crossly.

"Well, you've got to, so there, now it's put out ready," he insisted.

So she sat down and sipped her tea, and ate a little, in silence. She was thinking.

In a few minutes she was gone, to walk the two and half miles to Keston Station. All the things she was asking him she had in her bulging string bag. Paul watched her go up the road between the hedges — a little, quick-stepping figure, and his heart ached for her, that he was thrust forward again into pain and trouble. And he, tripping so quickly in her anxiety, felt at the back of

her her son's heart waiting on her, felt him bearing what part of the burden he could, even supporting her. And when she was at the hospital, she thought: "It *will* upset that lad when I tell him how bad it is. I'd better be careful." And when she was trudging home again, she felt she was coming to share her burden.

"Is it bad?" asked Paul, as soon as she entered the house.

"It's bad enough," she replied.

"What?"

She sighed and sat down, undoing her bonnet-strings. Her son watched her face as it was lifted, and her small, work-hardened hands fingering at the bow under her chin.

"Well," she answered, "it's not really dangerous, but the nurse says it's a dreadful smash. You see, a great piece of rock fell on his leg — here — and it's a compound fracture. There are pieces of bone sticking through —"

"Ugh — how horrid!" exclaimed the children.

"And," she continued, "of course he says he's going to die — it would n't be him if he did n't. 'I'm done for, my lass!' he said, looking at me. 'Don't be so silly,' I said to him. 'You're not going to die of a broken leg, however badly it's smashed.' 'I s'll niver come out of 'ere but in a wooden box,' he groaned. 'Well,' I said, 'if you want them to carry you into the garden in a wooden box, when you're better, I've no doubt they will.' 'If we think it's good for him,' said the Sister. She's an awfully nice Sister, but rather strict."

Mrs. Morel took off her bonnet. The children waited in silence.

"Of course, he *is* bad," she continued, "and he will be. It's a great shock, and he's lost a lot of blood; and, of course, it *is* a very dangerous smash. It's not at all sur that it will mend so easily. And then there's the *fever and the mortification* — if it took bad ways he'd quickl *be gone*. But there, he's a clean-blooded man, with wor

healing flesh, and so I see no reason why it *should* do ways. Of course there's a wound — ”

was pale now with emotion and anxiety. The three girls realized that it was very bad for their father, and the house was silent, anxious.

“ He always gets better,” said Paul after a while. “ That's what I tell him,” said the mother.

Everybody moved about in silence.

“ He really looked nearly done for,” she said. “ The Sister says that is the pain.”

He took away her mother's coat and bonnet.

“ He looked at me when I came away! I said: ‘I have to go now, Walter, because of the train — and the children.’ And he looked at me. It seems hard.”

He took up his brush again and went on painting. He went outside for some coal. Annie sat looking

And Mrs. Morel, in her little rocking-chair that her husband had made for her when the first baby was born, remained motionless, brooding. She was grieved, bitterly sorry for the man who was hurt so much. Ill, in her heart of hearts, where the love should have burned, there was a blank. Now, when all her pity was roused to its full extent, when she had slaved herself to death to nurse him and to comfort him, when she would have taken the pain herself, if she could, somewhere far away inside her, she felt indifferent to him and to his suffering. It hurt her most to think of this failure to love him, even when he roused her emotions. She brooded awhile.

“ There,” she said suddenly, “ when I'd got half-way to Keston, I found I'd come out in my working clothes — and look at them.” They were an old pair of brown stockings and rubbed through at the toes. “ I didn't know what to do with myself, for shame,” she added.

The morning, when Annie and Arthur were at school, Morel talked again to her son, who was helping her with the housework.

“ I found Barker at the hospital. He did look bad,

poor little fellow! ‘Well,’ I said to him, ‘what sort of journey did you have with him?’ ‘Dunna ax me, missis!’ he said. ‘Ay,’ I said, ‘I know what he’d be.’ ‘But i wor bad for him, Mrs. Morel, it wor that!’ he said. ‘I know,’ I said. ‘At ivry jolt I thought my eart would ha flown clean out o’ my mouth,’ he said. ‘An’ the scream give sometimes! Missis, not for a fortune would I go through wi’ it again.’ ‘I can quite understand it,’ I said. ‘It’s a nasty job, though,’ he said, ‘an’ one as ’ll be a long while afore it’s right again.’ ‘I’m afraid it will,’ I said. I like Mr. Barker — I do like him. There’s something so manly about him.”

Paul resumed his task silently.

“And of course,” Mrs. Morel continued, “for a man like your father, the hospital *is* hard. He *can’t* understand rules and regulations. And he won’t let anybody else touch him, not if he can help it. When he smashed the muscles of his thigh, and it had to be dressed four times a day, *would* he let anybody but me or his mother do it? He would n’t. So, of course, he’ll suffer in there with the nurses. And I did n’t like leaving him. I’m sure, when I kissed him an’ came away, it seemed a shame.”

So she talked to her son, almost as if she were thinking aloud to him, and he took it in as best he could, by sharing her trouble to lighten it. And in the end she shared almost everything with him without knowing.

Morel had a very bad time. For a week he was in a critical condition. Then he began to mend. And then, knowing he was going to get better, the whole family sighed with relief, and proceeded to live happily.

They were not badly off whilst Morel was in the hospital. There were fourteen shillings a week from the pit, ten shillings from the sick club, and five shillings from the Disability Fund; and then every week the butties had something for Mrs. Morel — five or seven shillings — so that she was quite well to do. And whilst Morel was progressing favourably in the hospital, the family was extraordinarily happy and peaceful. On Saturdays and

Wednesday Mrs. Morel went to Nottingham to see her husband. Then she always brought back some little things, a small tube of paints for Paul, or some thick paper; a couple of postcards for Annie, that the whole family received over for days before the girl was allowed to send them away; or a fret-saw for Arthur, or a bit of pretty wood. She described her adventures into the big shops with joy. Soon the folk in the picture-shop knew her, and knew about Paul. The girl in the book-shop took a keen interest in her. Mrs. Morel was full of information when she got home from Nottingham. The three sat round till bedtime, listening, putting in, arguing. Then Paul often raked the fire.

"I'm the man in the house now," he used to say to his mother with joy. They learned how perfectly peaceful a home could be. And they almost regretted — though none of them would have owned to such callousness — that their father was soon coming back.

Paul was now fourteen, and was looking for work. He was a rather small and rather finely-made boy, with dark brown hair and light blue eyes. His face had already lost its youthful chubbiness, and was becoming somewhat like William's — rough-featured, almost rugged — and it was extraordinarily mobile. Usually he looked as if he was full of life, and warm; then his smile, like his mother's, came suddenly and was very lovable; and when there was any clog in his soul's quick running, he went stupid and ugly. He was the sort of boy who becomes a clown and a lout as soon as he is not understood, or feels himself held cheap; and, again, is noble at the first touch of warmth.

He suffered very much from the first contact with anything. When he was seven, the starting school had been a mere and a torture to him. But afterwards he

And now that he felt he had to go out into the world he went through agonies of shrinking self-consciousness. He was quite a clever painter for a boy of his age, and he knew some French and German and mathe-

matics that Mr. Heaton had taught him. But nothin' he had was of any commercial value. He was not strong enough for heavy manual work, his mother said. He did not care for making things with his hands, preferred racing about, or making excursions into the country, or reading, or painting.

"What do you want to be?" his mother asked.

"Anything."

"That is no answer," said Mrs. Morel.

But it was quite truthfully the only answer he could give. His ambition, as far as this world's gear went, was quietly to earn his thirty or thirty-five shillings a week somewhere near home, and then, when his father died, have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked and live happy ever after. That was his programme as far as doing things went. But he was proud within himself, measuring people against himself, and placing them inexorably. And he thought that *perhaps* he might also make a painter, the real thing. But that he left alone.

"Then," said his mother, "you must look in the paper for the advertisements."

He looked at her. It seemed to him a bitter humiliation and an anguish to go through. But he said nothing. When he got up in the morning, his whole being was knotted up over this one thought:

"I've got to go and look for advertisements for a job."

It stood in front of the morning, that thought, killing all joy and even life, for him. His heart felt like a tight knot.

And then, at ten o'clock, he set off. He was supposed to be a queer, quiet child. Going up the sunny street of the little town, he felt as if all the folk he met said to themselves: "He's going to the Co-op reading-room look in the papers for a place. He can't get a job. suppose he's living on his mother." Then he crept up stone stairs behind the drapery shop at the Co-op, *peeped in the reading-room*. Usually one or two men

ither old, useless fellow, or colliers "on the club." entered, full of shrinking and suffering when they up, seated himself at the table, and pretended to e news. He knew they would think, "What does of thirteen want in a reading-room with a news- " and he suffered.

He looked wistfully out of the window. Already, a prisoner of industrialism. Large sunflowers, over the old red wall of the garden opposite, lookk- heir jolly way down on the women who were hurryto h something for dinner. The valley was full of rightening in the sun. Two colliers, among the raved their small white plumes of steam. Far off hills were the woods of Annesley, dark and fasci-

Already his heart went down. He was being into bondage. His freedom in the beloved home vas going now.

brewers' waggons came rolling up from Keston ormons barrels, four a side, like beans in a burst d. The waggoner, throned aloft, rolling massively eat, was not so much below Paul's eye. The man's his small, bullet head, was bleached almost white sun, and on his thick red arms, rocking idly on s apron, the white hairs glistened. His red face nd was almost asleep with sunshine. The horses, ne and brown, went on by themselves, looking by masters of the show.

wished he were stupid. "I wish," he thought to "I was fat like him, and like a dog in the sun. I was a pig and a brewer's waggoner."

, the room being at last empty, he would hastily advertisement on a scrap of paper, then another, o out in immense relief. His mother would scan copies.

," she said, "you may try."

am had written out a letter of application, couched rable business language, which Paul copied, with ns. *The boy's handwriting was execrable, so that*

William, who did all things well, got into a fever of impatience.

The elder brother was becoming quite swanky. In London he found that he could associate with men above his Bestwood friends in station. Some of the clerks in the office had studied for the law, and were or less going through a kind of apprenticeship. William always made friends among men wherever he went, he was so jolly. Therefore he was soon visiting and staying in the houses of men who, in Bestwood, would have looked on the unapproachable bank manager, and would never have called indifferently on the Rector. So he began to fancy himself as a great gun. He was, indeed, rather surprised at the ease with which he became a gentleman.

His mother was glad, he seemed so pleased. An lodgings in Walthamstow was so dreary. But now it seemed to come a kind of fever into the young man's letters. He was unsettled by all the change, he did not stand firm on his own feet, but seemed to spin round giddily on the quick current of the new life. His mother was anxious for him. She could feel him losing his way. He had danced and gone to the theatre, boated on the river, been out with friends; and she knew he sat afterwards in his cold bedroom grinding away at his work because he intended to get on in his office, and in the office as much as he could. He never sent his mother any money now. It was all taken, the little he had, for his own pleasure. And she did not want any, except sometimes, when she was in a tight corner, and when ten shillings would have relieved her much worry. She still dreamed of William, and what he would do, with herself behind him. Never a minute would she admit to herself how heavy and anxious her heart was because of him.

Also he talked a good deal now of a girl he had met at a dance, a handsome brunette, quite young, a lady, after whom the men were running thick fast.

"I wonder if you would run, my boy," his mother said.

to him, "unless you saw all the other men chasing her too. You feel safe enough and vain enough in a crowd. But take care, and see how you feel when you find yourself alone, and in triumph."

William resented these things, and continued the chase. He had taken the girl on the river. "If you saw her, mother, you would know how I feel. Tall and elegant, with the clearest of clear, transparent olive complexions, hair as black as jet, and such grey eyes — bright, mocking, like lights on water at night. It is all very well to be a bit satirical till you see her. And she dresses as well as any woman in London. I tell you, your son does n't half put his head up when she goes walking down Piccadilly with him."

Mrs. Morel wondered, in her heart, if her son did not go walking down Piccadilly with an elegant figure and fine clothes, rather than with a woman who was near to him. But she congratulated him in her doubtful fashion. And, as she stood over the washing-tub, the mother brooded over her son. She saw him saddled with an elegant and expensive wife, earning little money, dragging along and getting draggled in some small, ugly house in a suburb. "But there," she told herself, "I am very likely a silly — meeting trouble half-way." Nevertheless, the load of anxiety scarcely ever left her heart, lest William should do the wrong thing by himself.

Presently, Paul was bidden call upon Thomas Jordan, Manufacturer of Surgical Appliances, at 21, Spaniel Row, Nottingham. Mrs. Morel was all joy.

"There, you see!" she cried, her eyes shining. "You've only written four letters, and the third is answered. You're lucky, my boy, as I always said you were."

Paul looked at the picture of a wooden leg, adorned with elastic stockings and other appliances, that figured on Mr. Jordan's notepaper, and he felt alarmed. He had not known that elastic stockings existed. And he seemed to feel the business world, with its regulated system values, and its impersonality, and he dreaded it.

seemed monstrous also that a business could be on wooden legs.

Mother and son set off together one Tuesday morning in August and blazing hot. Paul walked with his heart screwed up tight inside him. He would have suffered much physical pain rather than this unreasonable longing at being exposed to strangers, to be accepted or rejected. Yet he chattered away with his mother as if he would never have confessed to her how he suffered these things, and she only partly guessed. She was like a sweetheart. She stood in front of the ticket office at Bestwood, and Paul watched her take from her pocket the money for the tickets. As he saw her hands in old black kid gloves getting the silver out of the purse, his heart contracted with pain of love of her.

She was quite excited, and quite gay. He suffered because she *would* talk aloud in presence of the travellers.

"Now look at that silly cow!" she said, "carrying round as if it thought it was a circus."

"It's most likely a bottfly," he said very low.

"A what?" she asked brightly and unashamed. They thought awhile. He was sensible all the time of having her opposite him. Suddenly their eyes met; she smiled to him — a rare, intimate smile, beautiful brightness and love. Then each looked out of the window.

The sixteen slow miles of railway journey passed. Mother and son walked down Station Street, feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together. In Carrington Street they stopped to hang over the parapet and look at the barges on the canal below.

"It's just like Venice," he said, seeing the sunshiny water that lay between high factory walls.

"Perhaps," she answered, smiling.

They enjoyed the shops immensely.

"Now you see that blouse," she would say, "won't that just suit our Annie? And for one-and-eleven! Isn't that cheap?"

"And made of needlework as well," he said.

"Yes."

They had plenty of time, so they did not hurry. The town was strange and delightful to them. But the boy was tied up inside in a knot of apprehension. He dreaded the interview with Thomas Jordan.

It was nearly eleven o'clock by St. Peter's Church. They turned up a narrow street that led to the Castle. It was gloomy and old-fashioned, having low dark shops and dark green house-doors with brass knockers, and yellow-ochred doorsteps projecting on to the pavement; then another old shop whose small window looked like a cunning, half-shut eye. Mother and son went cautiously, looking everywhere for "Thomas Jordan and Son." It was like hunting in some wild place. They were on tiptoe of excitement.

Suddenly they spied a big, dark archway, in which were names of various firms, Thomas Jordan among them.

"Here it is!" said Mrs. Morel. "But now *where* is it?"

They looked round. On one side was a queer, dark, cardboard factory, on the other a Commercial Hotel.

"It's up the entry," said Paul.

And they ventured under the archway, as into the jaws of the dragon. They emerged into a wide yard, like a well, with buildings all round. It was littered with straw and boxes, and cardboard. The sunshine actually caught one crate whose straw was streaming on to the yard like gold. But elsewhere the place was like a pit. There were several doors, and two flights of steps. Straight in front, on a dirty glass door at the top of staircase, loomed the ominous words "Thomas Jordan and Son — Surgical Appliances." Mrs. Morel went first, her son followed her. Charles I mounted his scaffold with lighter heart than had Paul Morel as he followed his mother up the dirty steps to the dirty door.

She pushed open the door, and stood in pleased sur-

prise. In front of her was a big warehouse, with cream paper parcels everywhere, and clerks, with their shirt sleeves rolled back, were going about in an at-home sort of way. The light was subdued, the glossy cream paper seemed luminous, the counters were of dark brown wood. All was quiet and very homely. Mrs. Morel took two steps forward, then waited. Paul stood behind her. She had on her Sunday bonnet and a black veil; he wore a boyish broad white collar and a Norfolk suit.

One of the clerks looked up. He was thin and tall with a small face. His way of looking was alert. Then he glanced round to the other end of the room, where was a glass office. And then he came forward. He did not say anything, but leaned in a gentle, inquiring fashion towards Mrs. Morel.

"Can I see Mr. Jordan?" she asked.

"I'll fetch him," answered the young man.

He went down to the glass office. A red-faced, whitewiskered old man looked up. He reminded Paul of a Pomeranian dog. Then the same little man came up the room. He had short legs, was rather stout, and wore a alpaca jacket. So, with one ear up, as it were, he came stoutly and inquiringly down the room.

"Good-morning!" he said, hesitating before Mrs. Morel, in doubt as to whether she were a customer or not.

"Good-morning. I came with my son, Paul Morel. You asked him to call this morning."

"Come this way," said Mr. Jordan, in a rather snapping little manner intended to be businesslike.

They followed the manufacturer into a grubby little room, upholstered in black American leather, glossy with the rubbing of many customers. On the table was a pile of trusses, yellow wash-leather hoops tangled together. They looked new and living. Paul sniffed the odour of new wash-leather. He wondered what the things were. *By this time he was so much stunned that he only noticed the outside things.*

Sit down!" said Mr. Jordan, irritably pointing Mrs. el to a horse-hair chair. She sat on the edge in an rtain fashion. Then the little old man fidgeted and d a paper.

Did you write this letter?" he snapped, thrusting : Paul recognized as his own notepaper in front of

Yes," he answered.

t that moment he was occupied in two ways: first, in ng guilty for telling a lie, since William had composed letter; second, in wondering why his letter seemed so nge and different, in the fat, red hand of the man, n what it had been when it lay on the kitchen table. as like part of himself, gone astray. He resented way the man held it.

Where did you learn to write?" said the old man sly.

aul merely looked at him shamedly, and did not answer. He is a bad writer," put in Mrs. Morel apologetically. n she pushed up her veil. Paul hated her for not g prouder with this common little man, and he loved face clear of the veil.

And you say you know French?" inquired the little , still sharply.

Yes," said Paul.

What school did you go to?"

The Board-school."

And did you learn it there?"

No—I—" The boy went crimson and got no her.

His godfather gave him lessons," said Mrs. Morel, pleading and rather distant.

r. Jordan hesitated. Then, in his irritable manner e always seemed to keep his hands ready for action e pulled another sheet of paper from his pocket, und it. The paper made a crackling noise. He handed Paul.

*that," he said.*

It was a note in French, in thin, flimsy foreign handwriting that the boy could not decipher. He stared blankly at the paper.

"‘Monsieur,’” he began; then he looked in great confusion at Mr. Jordan. “It’s the — it’s the —”

He wanted to say “handwriting,” but his wits would no longer work even sufficiently to supply him with the word. Feeling an utter fool, and hating Mr. Jordan, turned desperately to the paper again.

“‘Sir, — Please send me ’ — er — er — I can’t tell — er — ‘two pairs — *gris fil bas* — grey thread stockings’ — er — er — ‘*sans* — without’ — er — I can’t tell the words — er — ‘*doigts* — fingers’ — er — I can’t tell the —”

He wanted to say “handwriting,” but the word still refused to come. Seeing him stuck, Mr. Jordan snatched the paper from him.

“Please send by return two pairs grey thread stockings without *toes*. ”

“Well,” flashed Paul, “‘*doigts*’ means ‘fingers’ — well — as a rule —”

The little man looked at him. He did not know whether “*doigts*” meant “fingers”; he knew that for his purposes it meant “toes.”

“Fingers to stockings!” he snapped.

“Well, it *does* mean fingers,” the boy persisted.

He hated the little man, who made such a clod of him. Mr. Jordan looked at the pale, stupid, defiant boy, then at the mother, who sat quiet and with that peculiar short off look of the poor who have to depend on the favour of others.

“And when could he come?” he asked.

“Well,” said Mrs. Morel, “as soon as you wish. I has finished school now.”

“He would live in Bestwood?”

“Yes; but he could be in — at the station — at quarter to eight.”

“H’m!”

nded by Paul's being engaged as junior spiral clerk, ht shillings a week. The boy did not open his to say another word, after having insisted that ts " meant "fingers." He followed his mother down airs. She looked at him with her bright blue eyes love and joy.

think you 'll like it," she said.

*Doigts* ' does mean 'fingers,' mother, and it was the g. I could n't read the writing."

ever mind, my boy. I 'm sure he 'll be all right, and on't see much of him. Was n't that first young nice? I 'm sure you 'll like them."

ut was n't Mr. Jordan common, mother? Does he all?"

suppose he was a workman who has got on," she " You must n't mind people so much. They 're not disagreeable to *you* — it's their way. You always people are meaning things for you. But they don't."

as very sunny. Over the big desolate space of the t-place the blue sky shimmered, and the granite s of the paving glistened. Shops down the Long were deep in obscurity, and the shadow was full of . Just where the horse trams trundled across the t was a row of fruit stalls, with fruit blazing in in — apples and piles of reddish oranges, small rage plums and bananas. There was a warm scent it as mother and son passed. Gradually his feeling ominy and of rage sank.

'here should we go for dinner?" asked the mother. was felt to be a reckless extravagance. Paul had been in an eating-house once or twice in his life, en only to have a cup of tea and a bun. Most of ple of Bestwood considered that tea and bread-and-, and perhaps potted beef, was all they could afford in Nottingham. Real cooked dinner was considered extravagance. Paul felt rather guilty.

y found a place that looked quite cheap. But Mrs. Morel scanned the bill of fare, her heart was

heavy, things were so dear. So she ordered kidney pie and potatoes as the cheapest available dish.

"We ought n't to have come here, mother," said Paul.

"Never mind," she said. "We won't come again."

She insisted on his having a small currant tart, because he liked sweets.

"I don't want it, mother," he pleaded.

"Yes," she insisted; "you'll have it."

And she looked round for the waitress. But the waitress was busy, and Mrs. Morel did not like to bother her then. So the mother and son waited for the girl's pleasure whilst she flirted among the men.

"*Brazen hussy!*" said Mrs. Morel to Paul. "Look now, she's taking that man *his* pudding, and he came long after us."

"It does n't matter, mother," said Paul.

Mrs. Morel was angry. But she was too poor, and her orders were too meagre, so that she had not the courage to insist on her rights just then. They waited and waited.

"Should we go, mother?" he said.

Then Mrs. Morel stood up. The girl was passing near.

"Will you bring one currant tart?" said Mrs. Morel clearly.

The girl looked round insolently.

"Directly," she said.

"We have waited quite long enough," said Mrs. Morel.

In a moment the girl came back with the tart. Mrs. Morel asked coldly for the bill. Paul wanted to sink through the floor. He marvelled at his mother's hardness. He knew that only years of battling had taught her to insist even so little on her rights. She shrank as much as he.

"It's the last time I go *there* for anything!" she declared, when they were outside the place, thankful to be clear.

"We'll go," she said, "and look at Keep's and Boot's and one or two places, shall we?"

*They had discussions over the pictures, and Mrs. Morel*

buy him a little sable brush that he hankered at this indulgence he refused. He stood in front rs' shops and drapers' shops almost bored, but or her to be interested. They wandered on. just look at those black grapes!" she said. make your mouth water. I've wanted some of years, but I s'll have to wait a bit before I get

he rejoiced in the florists, standing in the door-  
ng.  
h! Is n't it simply lovely!"

w, in the darkness of the shop, an elegant young  
ack peering over the counter curiously.

're looking at you," he said, trying to draw his  
way.

what is it?" she exclaimed, refusing to be moved.  
s!" he answered, sniffing hastily. "Look,  
tubful."

here is — red and white. But really, I never  
eks to smell like it!" And, to his great relief,  
l out of the doorway, but only to stand in front  
idow.

" she cried to him, who was trying to get out of  
the elegant young lady in black — the shop-girl,  
Just look here!"

he reluctantly back.

just look at that fuschia!" she exclaimed,

" He made a curious, interested sound. " You'd  
ry second as the flowers was going to fall off,  
g so big an' heavy."

such an abundance!" she cried.

the way they drop downwards with their threads  
s!"

" she exclaimed. " Lovely!"

ider who'll buy it!" he said.

der!" she answered. " Not us."

uld die in our parlour."

"Yes, beastly cold, sunless hole; it kills every bit a plant you put in, and the kitchen chokes them death."

They bought a few things, and set off towards station. Looking up the canal, through the dark p of the buildings, they saw the Castle on its bluff of bro green-bushed rock, in a positive miracle of delicate s hine.

"Won't it be nice for me to come out at dinner-times said Paul. "I can go all round here and see everythi I s'll love it."

"You will," assented his mother.

He had spent a perfect afternoon with his moth They arrived home in the mellow evening, happy, glowing, and tired.

In the morning he filled in the form for his seas ticket and took it to the station. When he got back, mother was just beginning to wash the floor. He crouched up on the sofa.

"He says it 'll be here by Saturday," he said.

"And how much will it be?"

"About one pound eleven," he said.

She went on washing her floor in silence.

"Is it a lot?" he asked.

"It's no more than I thought," she answered.

"An' I s'll earn eight shillings a week," he said.

She did not answer, but went on with her work. At 1 she said:

"That William promised me, when he went to Lond as he'd give me a pound a month. He has given me shillings — twice; and now I know he has n't a farthing if I asked him. Not that I want it. Only just now you think he might be able to help with this ticket, wh I'd never expected."

"He earns a lot," said Paul.

"He earns a hundred and thirty pounds. But they all alike. They're large in promises, but it's precious little fulfilment you get."

e spends over fifty shillings a week on himself," said  
nd I keep this house on less than thirty," she  
!; "and am supposed to find money for extras.  
hey don't care about helping you, once they've  
He'd rather spend it on that dressed-up creature."  
e should have her own money if she's so grand,"  
aul.

le should, but she has n't. I asked him. And I  
he does n't buy her a gold bangle for nothing. I  
r whoever bought *me* a gold bangle."

iam was succeeding with his "Gipsy," as he called  
He asked the girl — her name was Louisa Lily  
Western — for a photograph to send to his mother.  
oto came — a handsome brunette, taken in profile,  
ng slightly — and, it might be, quite naked, for on  
otograph not a scrap of clothing was to be seen,  
naked bust.

s," wrote Mrs. Morel to her son, "the photograph  
nie is very striking, and I can see she must be  
tive. But do you think, my boy, it was very good  
f a girl to give her young man that photo to send  
mother — the first? Certainly the shoulders are  
ful, as you say. But I hardly expected to see so  
of them at the first view."

el found the photograph standing on the chiffonier  
parlour. He came out with it between his thick  
and finger.

ho dost reckon this is?" he asked of his wife.  
's the girl our William is going with," replied Mrs.

'm! 'Er 's a bright spark, from th' look on 'er, an'  
wunna do him owermuch good neither. Who is

er name is Louisa Lily Denys Western."

I' come again to-morrer!" exclaimed the miner.  
s 'er an actress?"

e is not. *She's* supposed to be a lady."

"I'll bet!" he exclaimed, still staring at the photo. "A lady, is she? An' how much does she reckon ter keep up this sort o' game on?"

"On nothing. She lives with an old aunt, whom she hates, and takes what bit of money's given her."

"H'm!" said Morel, laying down the photograph. "Then he's a fool to ha' ta'en up wi' such a one as that."

"Dear Mater," William replied. "I'm sorry you did n't like the photograph. It never occurred to me when I sent it, that you might n't think it decent. However, I told Gyp that it did n't quite suit your prim and proper notions, so she's going to send you another, that I hope will please you better. She's always being photographed; in fact, the photographers ask her if they may take her for nothing."

Presently the new photograph came, with a little silly note from the girl. This time the young lady was seen in a black satin evening bodice, cut square, with little puff sleeves, and black lace hanging down her beautiful arms.

"I wonder if she ever wears anything except evening clothes," said Mrs. Morel sarcastically. "I'm sure *ought* to be impressed."

"You are disagreeable, mother," said Paul. "I think the first one with bare shoulders is lovely."

"Do you?" answered his mother. "Well, I don't."

On the Monday morning the boy got up at six to start work. He had the season-ticket, which had cost such bitterness, in his waistcoat-pocket. He loved it with its bars of yellow across. His mother packed his dinner in a small, shut-up basket, and he set off at a quarter to seven to catch the 7.15 train. Mrs. Morel came to the end to see him off.

It was a perfect morning. From the ash-tree the slender green fruits that the children call "pigeons" were twinkling gaily down on a little breeze, into the front gardens of the houses. The valley was full of a lustre

ize, through which the ripe corn shimmered, and the steam from Minton pit melted swiftly. Puffs came. Paul looked over the high woods of Alders-re the country gleamed and home had never pulled so powerfully.

"Good-morning, mother," he said, smiling, but feeling happy.

"Good-morning," she replied cheerfully and stood in her white apron on the open road, as he crossed the field. He had a small, flat looked full of life. She felt, as she sang over the field, that where he determined to get. She thought of William. He would the fence instead of going round to the stile. He was away in London, doing well. Paul would be working at Nottingham. Now she had two sons in the world. She could think of two places, great centres of industry, that she had put a man into each of them, that men would work out what *she* wanted; they were far from her, they were of her, and their works also were hers. All the morning long she thought of Paul. At eight o'clock he climbed the dismal stairs of Jorgurgical Appliance Factory, and stood helplessly in the first great parcel-rack, waiting for somebody to call him up. The place was still not awake. Over the doors were great dust sheets. Two men only had arrived and were heard talking in a corner, as they took off their coats and rolled up their shirt-sleeves. It was just eight. Evidently there was no rush of punctuality. Paul listened to the voices of the two clerks. Then he heard someone cough, and saw in the office at the end of the room an old, decaying clerk, in a round smoking-jacket of black velvet embroidered with red and green, openers. He waited and waited. One of the junior clerks went to the old man, greeted him cheerily and

Evidently the old "chief" was deaf. Then the fellow came striding importantly down to his office. *He spied Paul.*

"Hello!" he said. "You the new lad?"

"Yes," said Paul.

"H'm! What's your name?"

"Paul Morel."

"Paul Morel? All right, you come on round here."

Paul followed him round the rectangle of counters. The room was second storey. It had a great hole in the thate of the floor, fenced as with a wall of counters, and

This wide shaft the lifts went, and the light for the did n't storey. Also there was a corresponding big, when ; hole in the ceiling, and one could see above, over ever, nee of the top floor, some machinery; and right away proad was the glass roof, and all light for the three storeys came downwards, getting dimmer, so that it was always night on the ground floor and rather gloomy on the second floor. The factory was the top floor, the warehouse the second, the storehouse the ground floor. It was an insanitary, ancient place.

Paul was led round to a very dark corner.

"This is the 'Spiral' corner," said the clerk. "You're Spiral, with Pappleworth. He's your boss, but he's not come yet. He does n't get here till half-past eight. So you can fetch the letters, if you like, from Mr. Mellings down there."

The young man pointed to the old clerk in the office.

"All right," said Paul.

"Here's a peg to hang your cap on. Here are your entry ledgers. Mr. Pappleworth won't be long."

And the thin young man stalked away with long, busy strides over the hollow wooden floor.

After a minute or two Paul went down and stood at the door of the glass office. The old clerk in the smoking cap looked down over the rim of his spectacles.

"Good-morning," he said, kindly and impressively. "You want the letters for the Spiral department Thomas?"

Paul resented being called "Thomas." But he took the letters and returned to his dark place, where

er made an angle, where the great parcel-rack came end, and where there were three doors in the corner. It on a high stool and read the letters — those whose writing was not too difficult. They ran as follows: Will you please send me at once a pair of lady's silk thigh-hose, without feet, such as I had from you ear; length, thigh to knee," etc. Or, "Major Chamberlain wishes to repeat his previous order for a silk non-suspensory bandage."

Any of these letters, some of them in French or Norman, were a great puzzle to the boy. He sat on his nervously awaiting the arrival of his "boss." He red tortures of shyness when, at half-past eight, the pretty girls for upstairs trooped past him.

Mr. Pappleworth arrived, chewing a chlorodyne gum, about twenty to nine, when all the other men were work. He was a thin, sallow man with a red nose, , staccato, and smartly but stiffly dressed. He was about thirty-six years old. There was something rather "groggy," rather smart, rather 'cute and shrewd, and something warm, and something slightly contemptible about him.

"You my new lad?" he said.

Paul stood up and said he was.

"Fetched the letters?"

Mr. Pappleworth gave a chew to his gum.

"Yes."

"Copied 'em?"

"No."

"Well, come on then, let 's look slippy. Changed your coat?"

"No."

"You want to bring an old coat and leave it here?" pronounced the last words with the chlorodyne gum between his side teeth. He vanished into darkness behind the great parcel-rack, reappeared coatless, turning up a striped shirt-cuff over a thin and hairy arm. Then slipped into his coat. Paul noticed how thin he was,

and that his trousers were in folds behind. He set stool, dragged it beside the boy's, and sat down.

"Sit down," he said.

Paul took a seat.

Mr. Pappleworth was very close to him. The seized the letters, snatched a long entry-book out rack in front of him, flung it open, seized a pen, and

"Now look here. You want to copy these letters here." He sniffed twice, gave a quick chew at his stared fixedly at a letter, then went very still and sorbed, and wrote the entry rapidly, in a beautiful ishing hand. He glanced quickly at Paul.

"See that?"

"Yes."

"Think you can do it all right?"

"Yes."

"All right then, let 's see you."

He sprang off his stool. Paul took a pen. Mr. Pappleworth disappeared. Paul rather liked copying the letters, but he wrote slowly, laboriously, and exceedingly ill. He was doing the fourth letter, and feeling quite well and happy, when Mr. Pappleworth reappeared.

"Now then, how'r' yer getting on? Done 'em?"

He leaned over the boy's shoulder, chewing, and smacking his lips. "A bit of chlorodyne.

"Strike my bob, lad, but you 're a beautiful writer," he exclaimed satirically. "Ne'er mind, how many done? Only three! I 'd 'a' eaten 'em. Get on, my lad, and put numbers on 'em. Here, look! Get on!"

Paul ground away at the letters, whilst Mr. Pappleworth fussed over various jobs. Suddenly the boy started, as a shrill whistle sounded near his ear. Mr. Pappleworth stopped, came, took a plug out of a pipe, and said, in an amiable, cross and bossy voice:

"Yes?"

Paul heard a faint voice, like a woman's, out of the mouth of the tube. He gazed in wonder, never having seen a speaking-tube before.

"Well," said Mr. Pappleworth disagreeably into the telephone, "you'd better get some of your back work done, then."

Again the woman's tiny voice was heard, sounding pretty and cross.

"I've not time to stand here while you talk," said Mr. Pappleworth, and he pushed the plug into the tube.

"Come, my lad," he said imploringly to Paul, "there's Polly crying out for them orders. Can't you buck up a bit? Here, come out!"

He took the book, to Paul's immense chagrin, and began to copy himself. He worked quickly and well. This time, he seized some strips of long yellow paper, about three inches wide, and made out the day's orders for the work-girls.

"You'd better watch me," he said to Paul, working all the while rapidly. Paul watched the weird little drawings of legs, and thighs, and ankles, with the strokes across and the numbers, and the few brief directions which his chief made upon the yellow paper. Then Mr. Pappleworth finished and jumped up.

"Come on with me," he said, and the yellow papers ringing in his hands, he dashed through a door and down the stairs, into the basement where the gas was burning. They crossed the cold, damp storeroom, then a long, bare room with a long table on trestles, into a smaller, cosy apartment, not very high, which had been built on to the main building. In this room a small woman with a red serge blouse, and her black hair done on top of her head, was waiting like a proud little bantam.

"Here y'are!" said Pappleworth.

"I think it is 'here you are!'" exclaimed Polly. "The girls have been here nearly half an hour waiting. Just think of the time wasted!"

"You think of getting your work done and not talking much," said Mr. Pappleworth. "You could ha' been fishing off."

"You know quite well we finished everything off on

Saturday!" cried Polly, flying at him, her dark eye flashing.

"Tu-tu-tu-tu-terterter!" he mocked. "Here's you new lad. Don't ruin him as you did the last."

"As we did the last!" repeated Polly. "Yes, we do a lot of ruining, we do. My word, a lad would take some ruining after he'd been with you."

"It's time for work now, not for talk," said Mr Pappleworth severely and coldly.

"It was time for work some time back," said Polly marching away with her head in the air. She was an erect little body of forty.

In that room were two round spiral machines on the bench under the window. Through the inner doorway was another, longer room, with six more machines. A little group of girls, nicely dressed and in white aprons, stood talking together.

"Have you nothing else to do but talk?" said Mr. Pappleworth.

"Only wait for you," said one handsome girl, laughing.

"Well, get on, get on," he said. "Come on, my lad. You'll know your road down here again."

And Paul ran upstairs after his chief. He was given some checking and invoicing to do. He stood at the desk, labouring in his execrable handwriting. Presently Mr. Jordan came strutting down from the glass office and stood behind him, to the boy's great discomfort. Suddenly a red and fat finger was thrust on the form he was filling in.

"Mr. J. A. Bates, Esquire!" exclaimed the cross voice just behind his ear.

Paul looked at "Mr. J. A. Bates, Esquire" in his own vile writing, and wondered what was the matter now.

"Did n't they teach you any better than *that* while they were at it? If you put 'Mr.' you don't put 'Esquire'—a man can't be both at once."

The boy regretted his too-much generosity in *dis*ing of honours, hesitated, and with trembling fing

scratched out the "Mr." Then all at once Mr. Jordan hatched away the invoice.

"Make another! Are you going to send *that* to a gentleman?" And he tore up the blue form irritably.

Paul, his ears red with shame, began again. Still Mr. Jordan watched.

"I don't know what they *do* teach in school. You'll have to write better than that. Lads learn nothing nowadays, but how to recite poetry and play the fiddle. Have you seen his writing?" he asked of Mr. Pappleorth.

"Yes; prime, isn't it?" replied Mr. Pappleworth differently.

Mr. Jordan gave a little grunt, not unamiable. Paul vined that his master's bark was worse than his bite. Indeed, the little manufacturer, although he spoke bad nglish, was quite gentleman enough to leave his men one and to take no notice of trifles. But he knew he d not look like the boss and owner of the show, so he d to play his rôle of proprietor at first, to put things a right footing.

"Let's see, *what's* your name?" asked Mr. Pappleorth of the boy.

"Paul Morel."

It is curious that children suffer so much at having to ronounce their own names.

"Paul Morel, is it? All right, you Paul-Morel through em things there, and then — "

Mr. Pappleworth subsided on to a stool, and began ritng. A girl came up from out of a door just behind, at some newly pressed elastic web appliances on the nter, and returned. Mr. Pappleworth picked up the hitey-blue knee-band, examined it, and its yellow orderaper quickly, and put it on one side. Next was a fleshnk "leg." He went through the few things, wrote out couple of orders, and called to Paul to accompany him. his time they went through the door whence the girl had erged. There Paul found himself at the top of a little

wooden flight of steps, and below him saw a room windows round two sides, and at the farther end half dozen girls sitting bending over the benches in the from the window, sewing. They were singing together "Two Little Girls in Blue." Hearing the door open they all turned round, to see Mr. Pappleworth and looking down on them from the far end of the room. They stopped singing.

"Can't you make a bit less row?" said Mr. Pappleworth. "Folk'll think we keep cats."

A hunchback woman on a high stool turned her rather heavy face towards Mr. Pappleworth, and said a contralto voice:

"They're all tom-cats then."

In vain Mr. Pappleworth tried to be impressive for Paul's benefit. He descended the steps into the finish off room, and went to the hunchback Fanny. She had a short body on her high stool that her head, with great bands of bright brown hair, seemed over large did her pale, heavy face. She wore a dress of green-brown cashmere, and her wrists, coming out of the narrow cuffs, were thin and flat, as she put down her work nervously. He showed her something that was wrong with a knee-cap.

"Well," she said, "you need n't come blaming it on me. It's not my fault." Her colour mounted to her cheek.

"I never said it *was* your fault. Will you do as I say?" replied Mr. Pappleworth shortly.

"You don't say it's my fault, but you'd like to make out as it was," the hunchback woman cried, almost in tears. Then she snatched the knee-cap from her "bosom" saying: "Yes, I'll do it for you, but you need n't be so snappy."

"Here's your new lad," said Mr. Pappleworth.

Fanny turned, smiling very gently on Paul.

"Oh!" she said.

"Yes; don't make a softy of him between you."

## *Paul Launches into Life*

"It's not us as 'ud make a softy of him," she said dignantly.

"Come on then, Paul," said Mr. Pappleworth.

"*Au revoy, Paul,*" said one of the girls.

There was a titter of laughter. Paul went out, blushing deeply, not having spoken a word.

The day was very long. All morning the work-people were coming to speak to Mr. Pappleworth. Paul was waiting or learning to make up parcels, ready for the midday post. At one o'clock, or, rather, at a quarter to two, Mr. Pappleworth disappeared to catch his train: he lived in the suburbs. At one o'clock, Paul, feeling very hungry, took his dinner-basket down into the stockroom in the basement, that had the long table on trestles, and ate his meal hurriedly, alone in that cellar of gloom and desolation. Then he went out of doors. The brightness and the freedom of the streets made him feel adventurous and happy. But at two o'clock he was back in the corner of the big room. Soon the work-girls went trooping past, making remarks. It was the commoner girls who worked upstairs at the heavy tasks of truss-making and the finishing of artificial limbs. He waited for Mr. Pappleworth, knowing what to do, sitting scribbling on the yellow paper. Mr. Pappleworth came at twenty minutes past three. Then he sat and gossiped with Paul, treating the boy entirely as an equal, even in age.

In the afternoon there was never very much to do, unless it were near the week-end, and the accounts had to be made up. At five o'clock all the men went down into the dungeon with the table on trestles, and there they had their bread-and-butter on the bare, dirty boards, eating with the same kind of ugly haste and slovenliness with which they ate their meal. And yet upstairs the atmosphere among them was always jolly and clear. The noise and the trestles affected them.

After tea, when all the gases were lighted, work went on briskly. There was the big evening post to get off. These came up warm and newly pressed from the

workrooms. Paul had made out the invoices. Now he had the packing up and addressing to do, then he had to weigh his stock of parcels on the scales. Everywhere voices were calling weights, there was the chink of metal, the rapid snapping of string, the hurrying to old Mr. Mellings for stamps. And at last the postman came with his sack, laughing and jolly. Then everything slacked off, and Paul took his dinner-basket and ran to the station to catch the eight-twenty train. The day in the factory was just twelve hours long.

His mother sat waiting for him rather anxiously. He had to walk from Keston, so was not home until about twenty past nine. And he left the house before seven in the morning. Mrs. Morel was rather anxious about his health. But she herself had had to put up with so much that she expected her children to take the same odds. They must go through with what came. And Paul stayed at Jordan's, although all the time he was there his health suffered from the darkness and lack of air and the long hours.

He came in pale and tired. His mother looked at him. She saw he was rather pleased, and her anxiety all went.

"Well, and how was it?" she asked.

"Ever so funny, mother," he replied. "You don't have to work a bit hard, and they're nice with you."

"And did you get on all right?"

"Yes; they only say my writing's bad. But Mr. Pappleworth—he's my man—said to Mr. Jordan I should be all right. I'm Spiral, mother; you must come and see. It's ever so nice."

Soon he liked Jordan's. Mr. Pappleworth, who had a certain "saloon bar" flavour about him, was always natural, and treated him as if he had been a comrade. Sometimes the "Spiral boss" was irritable, and chewed more lozenges than ever. Even then, however, he was ~~offensive~~, but one of those people who hurt themselves ~~their own irritability~~ more than they hurt other pe-

"Have n't you done that *yet?*" he would cry. "Go on, be a month of Sundays."

Again, and Paul could understand him least then, he was jocular and in high spirits.

"I'm going to bring my little Yorkshire terrier bitch to-morrow," he said jubilantly to Paul.

"What's a Yorkshire terrier?"

"Don't know what a Yorkshire terrier is? *Don't know a Yorkshire*—" Mr. Pappleworth was aghast.

"Is it a little silky one—colours of iron and rusty silver?"

"That's it, my lad. She's a gem. She's had five pounds' worth of pups already, and she's worth over seven pounds herself; and she does n't weigh twenty ounces."

The next day the bitch came. She was a shivering, miserable morsel. Paul did not care for her; she seemed so like a wet rag that would never dry. Then a man called for her, and began to make coarse jokes. But Mr. Pappleworth nodded his head in the direction of the boy, and the talk went on *sotto voce*.

Mr. Jordan only made one more excursion to watch Paul, and then the only fault he found was seeing the boy lay his pen on the counter.

"Put your pen in your ear, if you're going to be a clerk. Pen in your ear!" And one day he said to the lad, "Why don't you hold your shoulders straighter? Come down here," when he took him into the glass office and fitted him with special braces for keeping the shoulders square.

But Paul liked the girls best. The men seemed common and rather dull. He liked them all, but they were uninteresting. Polly, the little brisk overseer downstairs, finding Paul eating in the cellar, asked him if she could cook him anything on her little stove. Next day his mother gave him a dish that could be heated up. He took it into the pleasant, clean room to Polly. And very soon it grew to be an established custom that he should have dinner

with her. When he came in at eight in the morning took his basket to her, and when he came down at o'clock she had his dinner ready.

He was not very tall, and pale, with thick chestnut hair irregular features, and a wide, full mouth. She was like a small bird. He often called her a "robinet." Though naturally rather quiet, he would sit and chatter with her for hours, telling her about his home. The girls all liked to hear him talk. They often gathered in a little circle while he sat on a bench, and held forth to them, laughing. Some of them regarded him as a curious little creature so serious, yet so bright and jolly, and always so delicate in his way with them. They all liked him, and he adored them. Polly he felt he belonged to. Then Connie, with her mane of red hair, her face of apple-blossom, her murmuring voice, such a lady in her shabby black frock appealed to his romantic side.

"When you sit winding," he said, "it looks as if you were spinning at a spinning-wheel — it looks ever so nice. You remind me of Elaine in the 'Idylls of the King.' I draw you if I could."

And she glanced at him blushing shyly. And later he had a sketch he prized very much: Connie sitting on the stool before the wheel, her flowing mane of red hair on her rusty black frock, her red mouth shut and serious, running the scarlet thread off the hank on to the reel.

With Louie, handsome and brazen, who always seemed to thrust her hip at him, he usually joked.

Emma was rather plain, rather old, and condescending. But to condescend to him made her happy, and he did not mind.

"How do you put needles in?" he asked.

"Go away and don't bother."

"But I ought to know how to put needles in."

She ground at her machine all the while steadily.

"There are many things you ought to know," she replied.

"Tell me, then, how to stick needles in the machine

"Oh, the boy, what a nuisance he is! Why, *this* is how you do it."

He watched her attentively. Suddenly a whistle piped. Then Polly appeared, and said in a clear voice:

"Mr. Pappleworth wants to know how much longer you're going to be down here playing with the girls, Paul."

Paul flew upstairs, calling "Good-bye!" and Emma drew herself up.

"It was n't *me* who wanted him to play with the machine," she said.

As a rule, when all the girls came back at two o'clock, he ran upstairs to Fanny, the hunchback, in the finishing-off room. Mr. Pappleworth did not appear till twenty to three, and he often found his boy sitting beside Fanny, talking, or drawing, or singing with the girls.

Often, after a minute's hesitation, Fanny would begin to sing. She had a fine contralto voice. Everybody joined in the chorus, and it went well. Paul was not at all embarrassed, after a while, sitting in the room with the half a dozen work-girls.

At the end of the song Fanny would say:

"I know you've been laughing at me."

"Don't be so soft, Fanny!" cried one of the girls.

Once there was mention of Connie's red hair.

"Fanny's is better, to my fancy," said Emma.

"You need n't try to make a fool of me," said Fanny, flushing deeply.

"No, but she has, Paul; she's got beautiful hair."

"It's a treat of a colour," said he. "That coldish colour, like earth, and yet shiny. It's like bog-water."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed one girl, laughing.

"How I do but get criticized," said Fanny.

"But you should see it down, Paul," cried Emma earnestly. "It's simply beautiful. Put it down for him, Fanny, if he wants something to paint."

Fanny would not, and yet she wanted to.

"Then I'll take it down myself," said the lad.

"Well, you can if you like," said Fanny.

And he carefully took the pins out of the knot, and rush of hair, of uniform dark brown, slid over the hunchback.

"What a lovely lot!" he exclaimed.

The girls watched. There was silence. They shook the hair loose from the coil.

"It's splendid!" he said, smelling its perfume. "bet it's worth pounds."

"I'll leave it you when I die, Paul," said Fanny, joking.

"You look just like anybody else, sitting drying hair," said one of the girls to the long-legged hunchback.

Poor Fanny was morbidly sensitive, always imagining insults. Polly was curt and business-like. The two compartments were for ever at war, and Paul was always finding Fanny in tears. Then he was made the recipient of all her woes, and he had to plead her cause with Paul.

So the time went along happily enough. The factory had a homely feel. No one was rushed or driven. He always enjoyed it when the work got faster, towards parting time, and all the men united in labour. He liked to watch his fellow clerks at work. The man was the work, the work was the man, one thing, for the time being. It was different with the girls. The real woman never seemed to be there at the task, but as if left out, waiting.

From the train going home at night he used to watch the lights of the town, sprinkled thick on the hills, fused together in a blaze in the valleys. He felt rich in life and happy. Drawing farther off, there was a patch of light at Bulwell like myriad petals shaken to the ground from the shed stars; and beyond was the red glare of the tynes, playing like hot breath on the clouds.

He had to walk two and more miles from Keston home up two long hills, down two short hills. He was often tired, and he counted the lamps climbing the hill all the time, how many more to pass. And from the hill-top at pitch-dark nights, he looked round on the villages

: miles away, that shone like swarms of glittering things, almost a heaven against his feet. Marlpool Eleanor scattered the far-off darkness with brilliance. occasionally the black valley space between was l, violated by a great train rushing south to London rth to Scotland. The trains roared by like project-evel on the darkness, fuming and burning, making alley clang with their passage. They were gone, ie lights of the towns and villages glittered in silence. I then he came to the corner at home, which faced her side of the night. The ash-tree seemed a friend

His mother rose with gladness as he entered. He s eight shillings proudly on the table.

’ll help, mother?’ he asked wistfully.

here’s precious little left,’ she answered, ‘‘after ticket and dinners and such are taken off.’’

en he told her the budget of the day. His life-like an Arabian Nights, was told night after night mother. It was almost as if it were her own life.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEATH IN THE FAMILY

A RTHUR MOREL was growing up. He was a quareless, impulsive boy, a good deal like his father. He hated study, made a great moan if he had to work, and escaped as soon as possible to his sport again.

In appearance he remained the flower of the family, being well made, graceful, and full of life. His dark brown hair and fresh colouring, and his exquisite dark blue eyes shaded with long lashes, together with his generous manner and fiery temper, made him a favourite. But as he grew older his temper became uncertain, and he flew into rages over nothing, seemed unbearably raw and irritable.

His mother, whom he loved, wearied of him sometimes. He thought only of himself. When he wanted amusement, all that stood in his way he hated, even if it were she. When he was in trouble, he moaned to her ceaselessly.

"Goodness, boy!" she said, when he groaned about his master who, he said, hated him, "if you don't like it, alter it, and if you can't alter it, put up with it."

And his father, whom he had loved and who had unshipped him, he came to detest. As he grew older Morel fell into a slow ruin. His body, which had been beautiful in movement and in being, shrank, did not seem to increase with the years, but to get mean and rather despica. There came over him a look of meanness and of paltriness. And when the mean-looking elderly man bullied or ordered the boy about, Arthur was furious. Moreover, Morel's manners got worse and worse, his habits somewhat disgusting. When the children were growing up and in

crucial stage of adolescence, the father was like some ugly irritant to their souls. His manners in the house were the same as he used among the colliers down pit.

"Dirty nuisance!" Arthur would cry, jumping up and going straight out of the house when his father disgusted him. And Morel persisted the more because his children hated it. He seemed to take a kind of satisfaction in disgusting them, and driving them nearly mad, while they were so irritably sensitive at the age of fourteen or fifteen. So that Arthur, who was growing up when his father was degenerate and elderly, hated him worst of all.

Then, sometimes, the father would seem to feel the contemptuous hatred of his children.

"There's not a man tries harder for his family!" he would shout. "He does his best for them, and then gets treated like a dog. But I'm not going to stand it, I tell you!"

But for the threat and the fact that he did not try so hard as he imagined, they would have felt sorry. As it was, the battle now went on nearly all between father and children, he persisting in his dirty and disgusting ways, just to assert his independence. They loathed him.

Arthur was so inflamed and irritable at last, that when he won a scholarship for the Grammar School in Nottingham, his mother decided to let him live in town, with one of her sisters, and only come home at week-ends.

Annie was still a junior teacher in the Board-school, earning about four shillings a week. But soon she would have fifteen shillings, since she had passed her examination, and there would be financial peace in the house.

Mrs. Morel clung now to Paul. He was quiet and not brilliant. But still he stuck to his painting, and still he stuck to his mother. Everything he did was for her. She waited for his coming home in the evening, and then she unburdened herself of all she had pondered, or of all that had occurred to her during the day. He sat and listened with his earnestness. The two shared lives.

William was engaged now to his blonde, and had

bought her an engagement ring that cost eight guineas. The children gasped at such a fabulous price.

"Eight guineas!" said Morel. "More fool him! he'd gen me some on 't, it 'ud ha' looked better on 'im."

"Given *you* some of it!" cried Mrs. Morel. "V give *you* some of it!"

She remembered *he* had bought no engagement ring all, and she preferred William, who was not mean, if were foolish. But now the young man talked only of dances to which he went with his betrothed, and the ferent resplendent clothes she wore; or he told his mother with glee how they went to the theatre like great sw

He wanted to bring the girl home. Mrs. Morel said she should come at the Christmas. This time William arrived with a lady, but with no presents. Mrs. Morel had prepared supper. Hearing footsteps, she rose and went to the door. William entered.

"Hello, mother!" He kissed her hastily, then stood aside to present a tall, handsome girl, who was wearing costume of fine black-and-white check, and furs.

"Here's Gyp!"

Miss Western held out her hand and showed her teeth in a small smile.

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Morel!" she exclaimed.

"I am afraid you will be hungry," said Mrs. Morel.

"Oh, no, we had dinner in the train. Have you got gloves, Chubby?"

William Morel, big and raw-boned, looked at her quickly.

"How should I?" he said.

"Then I've lost them. Don't be cross with me."

A frown went over his face, but he said nothing. She glanced round the kitchen. It was small and curious her, with its glittering kissing-bunch, its evergreens behind the pictures, its wooden chairs and little deal table. that moment Morel came in.

"Hello, dad!"

"Hello, my son! Tha's let on me!"

The two shook hands, and William presented the lady. She gave the same smile that showed her teeth.

"How do you do, Mr. Morel?"

Morel bowed obsequiously.

"I'm very well, and I hope so are you. You must make yourself very welcome."

"Oh, thank you," she replied, rather amused.

"You will like to go upstairs," said Mrs. Morel.

"If you don't mind; but not if it is any trouble to you."

"It is no trouble. Annie will take you. Walter, carry up this box."

"And don't be an hour dressing yourself up," said William to his betrothed.

Annie took a brass candlestick, and, too shy almost to speak, preceded the young lady to the front bedroom, which Mr. and Mrs. Morel had vacated for her. It, too, was small and cold by candle-light. The colliers' wives only lit fires in bedrooms in case of extreme illness.

"Shall I unstrap the box?" asked Annie.

"Oh, thank you very much!"

Annie played the part of maid, then went downstairs for hot water.

"I think she's rather tired, mother," said William. "It's a beastly journey, and we had such a rush."

"Is there anything I can give her?" asked Mrs. Morel.

"Oh no, she'll be all right."

But there was a chill in the atmosphere. After half an hour Miss Western came down, having put on a purplish-loured dress, very fine for the collier's kitchen.

"I told you you'd no need to change," said William to her.

"Oh, Chubby!" Then she turned with that sweetish smile to Mrs. Morel. "Don't you think he's always tumbling, Mrs. Morel?"

"Is he?" said Mrs. Morel. "That's not very nice of him."

"It is n't, really!"

"You are cold," said the mother. "Won't you come near the fire?"

Morel jumped out of his arm-chair.

"Come and sit you here!" he cried. "Come and sit you here!"

"No, dad, keep your own chair. Sit on the sofa, Gyp," said William.

"No, no!" cried Morel. "This cheer's warmest. Come and sit here, Miss Wesson."

"Thank you *so* much," said the girl, seating herself in the collier's arm-chair, the place of honour. She shivered, feeling the warmth of the kitchen penetrate her.

"Fetch me a hanky, Chubby dear!" she said, putting up her mouth to him, and using the same intimate tone as if they were alone; which made the rest of the family feel as if they ought not to be present. The young lady evidently did not realize them as people: they were creatures to her for the present. William winced.

In such a household, in Streatham, Miss Western would have been a lady condescending to her inferiors. These people were, to her, certainly clownish — in short, the working classes. How was she to adjust herself?

"I'll go," said Annie.

Miss Western took no notice, as if a servant had spoken. But when the girl came downstairs again with the handkerchief, she said, "Oh, thank you!" in a gracious way.

She sat and talked about the dinner on the train, which had been so poor; about London, about dances. She was really very nervous, and chattered from fear. Morel sat all the time smoking his thick twist tobacco, watching her, and listening to her glib London speech, as he puffed. Mrs. Morel, dressed up in her best black silk blouse, answered quietly and rather briefly. The three children sat round in silence and admiration. Miss Western was the princess. Everything of the best was got out for her: *the best cups, the best spoons, the best tablecloth, the best coffee-jug.* The children thought she must find it quite

grand. She felt strange, not able to realize the people, not knowing how to treat them. William joked, and was slightly uncomfortable.

At about ten o'clock he said to her:

"Are n't you tired, Gyp?"

"Rather, Chubby," she answered, at once in the intimate tones and putting her head slightly on one side.

"I'll light her the candle, mother," he said.

"Very well," replied the mother.

Miss Western stood up, held out her hand to Mrs. Morel.

"Good-night, Mrs. Morel," she said.

Paul sat at the boiler, letting the water run from the tap into a stone beer-bottle. Annie swathed the bottle in an old flannel pit-singlet, and kissed her mother good-night. She was to share the room with the lady, because the house was full.

"You wait a minute," said Mrs. Morel to Annie. And Annie sat nursing the hot-water bottle. Miss Western shook hands all round, to everybody's discomfort, and took her departure, preceded by William. In five minutes he was downstairs again. His heart was rather sore; he did not know why. He talked very little till everybody had gone to bed, but himself and his mother. Then he stood with his legs apart, in his old attitude on the hearthrug, and said hesitatingly:

"Well, mother?"

"Well, my son?"

She sat in her best silk blouse in the rocking-chair, feeling somehow hurt and humiliated, for his sake.

"Do you like her?"

"Yes," came the slow answer.

"She's shy yet, mother. She's not used to it. It's different from her aunt's house, you know."

"Of course it is, my boy; and she must find it difficult."

"She does." Then he frowned swiftly. "If only she would n't put on her blessed airs!"

"It's only her first awkwardness, my boy. She'll be all right."

"That's it, mother," he replied gratefully. But his brow was gloomy. "You know, she's not like you mother. She's not serious, and she can't think."

"She's young, my boy."

"Yes; and she's had no sort of show. Her mother died when she was a child. Since then she's lived with her aunt, whom she can't bear. And her father was a rake. She's had no love."

"No! Well, you must make up to her."

"And so — you have to forgive her a lot of things."

"What do you have to forgive her, my boy?"

"I dunno. When she seems shallow, you have to remember she's never had anybody to bring her deeper side out. And she's *fearfully* fond of me."

"Anybody can see that."

"But you know, mother — she's — she's different from us. Those sort of people, like those she lives amongst, they don't seem to have the same principles."

"You must n't judge too hastily," said Mrs. Morel.

But he seemed uneasy within himself.

In the morning, however, he was up singing and larking round the house.

"Hello!" he called, sitting on the stairs. "Are you getting up?"

"Yes," her voice called faintly.

"Merry Christmas!" he shouted to her.

Her laugh, pretty and tinkling, was heard in the bedroom. She did not come down in half an hour.

"Was she *really* getting up when she said she was?" he asked of Annie.

"Yes, she was," replied Annie.

He waited awhile, then went to the stairs again.

"Happy New Year," he called.

"Thank you, Chubby dear!" came the laughing voice, *far away*.

"Buck up!" he implored.

It was nearly an hour, and still he was waiting for her. Morel, who always rose before six, looked at the clock.

"Well, it's a winder!" he exclaimed.

The family had breakfasted, all but William. He went to the foot of the stairs.

"Shall I have to send you an Easter egg up there?" he called, rather crossly. She only laughed. The family expected, after that time of preparation, something like magic. At last she came, looking very nice in a blouse and skirt.

"Have you *really* been all this time getting ready?" he asked.

"Chubby dear! That question is not permitted, i ten Mrs. Morel?"

She played the grand lady at first. When she Jor with William to chapel, he in his frock coat and silk the she in her furs and London-made costume, Paul and Arthur and Annie expected everybody to bow On a ground in admiration. And Morel, standing in his suit at the end of the road, watching the gallant at breakfast he was the father of princes and princesses.

And yet she was not so grand. For a year n been a sort of secretary or clerk in a London eathing. But while she was with the Morels she queened it. She sat and let Annie or Paul wait on her as if they were her servants. She treated Mrs. Morel with a certain glibness and Morel with patronage. But after a day or so she began to change her tune.

William always wanted Paul or Annie to go along with them on their walks. It was so much more interesting. And Paul really did admire "Gipsy" whole-heartedly; in fact, his mother scarcely forgave the boy for the adulation with which he treated the girl.

On the second day, when Lily said, "Oh, Annie, do you know where I left my muff?" William replied:

"You know it is in *your* bedroom. Why do you ask Annie?"

And Lily went upstairs with a cross, shut mouth. But it angered the young man that she made a servant of his sister.

On the third evening William and Lily were sitting together in the parlour by the fire in the dark. At a quarter to eleven Mrs. Morel was heard raking the fire. William came out to the kitchen, followed by his beloved.

"Is it as late as that, mother?" he said. She had been sitting alone.

"It is not *late*, my boy, but it is as late as I usually up."

"Won't you go to bed, then?" he asked.

"Men and leave you two? No, my boy, I don't believe ut."

"Can't you trust us, mother?"

"Whether I can or not, I won't do it. You can stay from sun if you like, and I can read."

"Amongst two bed, Gyp," he said to his girl. "We won't keep "You waiting."

But he has left the candle burning, Lily," said Mrs. In the i I think you will see."

round the mank you. Good-night, Mrs. Morel."

Whele! I kissed his sweetheart at the foot of the stairs, and she we . He returned to the kitchen.

"Can't you trust us, mother?" he repeated, rather offended.

"My boy, I tell you I don't *believe* in leaving two young things like you alone downstairs when everyone else is in bed."

And he was forced to take this answer. He kissed his mother good-night.

At Easter he came over alone. And then he discussed his sweetheart endlessly with his mother.

"You know, mother, when I'm away from her I do care for her a bit. I should n't care if I never saw again. But, then, when I'm with her in the evenings I awfully fond of her."

t's a queer sort of love to marry on," said Mrs., "if she holds you no more than that!"

"It is funny!" he exclaimed. It worried and perplexed

"But yet — there's so much between us now I  
n't give her up."

"You know best," said Mrs. Morel. "But if it is as  
ay, I would n't call it *love* — at any rate, it does n't  
much like it."

"Oh, I don't know, mother. She's an orphan, and —"  
They never came to any sort of conclusion. He seemed  
ed and rather fretted. She was rather reserved. All  
strength and money went in keeping this girl. He  
scarcely afford to take his mother to Nottingham  
he came over.

ul's wages had been raised at Christmas to ten  
igs, to his great joy. He was quite happy at Jor-  
, but his health suffered from the long hours and the  
lement. His mother, to whom he became more and  
significant, thought how to help.

s half-holiday was on Monday afternoon. On a  
lay morning in May, as the two sat alone at break-  
she said:

think it will be a fine day."

looked up in surprise. This meant something.

You know Mr. Leivers has gone to live on a new

Well, he asked me last week if I would n't go and  
Mrs. Leivers, and I promised to bring you on Monday  
s fine. Shall we go?"

say, little woman, how lovely!" he cried. "And  
go this afternoon?"

ul hurried off to the station jubilant. Down Derby  
was a cherry-tree that glistened. The old brick  
by the Statutes ground burned scarlet, spring was a  
flame of green. And the steep swoop of high road  
in its cool morning dust, splendid with patterns of  
line and shadow, perfectly still. The trees sloped their  
green shoulders proudly; and inside the warehouse  
the morning, the boy had a vision of spring outside.

When he came home at dinner-time his mother rather excited.

"Are we going?" he asked.

"When I'm ready," she replied.

Presently he got up.

"Go and get dressed while I wash up," he said.

She did so. He washed the pots, straightened, and took her boots. They were quite clean. Mrs. Morel one of those naturally exquisite people who can wash mud without dirtying their shoes. But Paul had to polish them for her. They were kid boots at eight shillings a pair. He, however, thought them the most dainty boots in the world, and he cleaned them with as much reverence as if they had been flowers.

Suddenly she appeared in the inner doorway rather shyly. She had got a new cotton blouse on. Paul jumped up and went forward.

"Oh, my stars!" he exclaimed. "What a bobby-dazzler!"

She sniffed in a little haughty way, and put her head back.

"It's not a bobby-dazzler at all!" she replied. "Very quiet!"

She walked forward, whilst he hovered round her.

"Well," she asked, quite shy, but pretending to be high and mighty, "do you like it?"

"Awfully! You are a fine little woman to go out with!"

He went and surveyed her from the back.

"Well," he said, "if I was walking down the street behind you, I should say, 'Does n't that little person suit herself!'"

"Well, she does n't," replied Mrs. Morel. "She's sure it suits her."

"Oh no! she wants to be in dirty black, looking as if she was wrapped in burnt paper. It does suit you, though, to say you look nice."

She sniffed in her little way, pleased, but pretending to know better.

"Well," she said, "it's cost me just three shillings. You could n't have got it ready-made for that price, could you?"

"I should think you could n't," he replied.

"And, you know, it's good stuff."

"Awfully pretty," he said.

The blouse was white, with a little sprig of heliotrope and black.

"Too young for me, though, I'm afraid," she said.

"Too young for you!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Why don't you buy some false white hair and stick it on your head?"

"I s'll soon have no need," she replied. "I'm going to die fast enough."

"Well, you've no business to," he said. "What do I want with a white-haired mother?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to put up with one, my lad," he said rather strangely.

They set off in great style, she carrying the umbrella William had given her, because of the sun. Paul was considerably taller than she, though he was not big. He encied himself.

On the fallow land the young wheat shone silkily. Minton pit waved its plumes of white steam, coughed, and rattled hoarsely.

"Now look at that!" said Mrs. Morel. Mother and son stood on the road to watch. Along the ridge of the great pit-hill crawled a little group in silhouette against the sky, a horse, a small truck, and a man. They climbed the incline against the heavens. At the end the man tipped the waggon. There was an undue rattle as the waste fell down the sheer slope of the enormous bank.

"You sit a minute, mother," he said, and she took a seat on a bank, whilst he sketched rapidly. She was silent whilst he worked, looking round at the afternoon, the red stages shining among their greenness.

"The world is a wonderful place," she said, "and wonderfully beautiful."

"And so 's the pit," he said. "Look how it heaps together, like something alive almost — a big creature you don't know."

"Yes," she said. "Perhaps!"

"And all the trucks standing waiting, like a string of beasts to be fed," he said.

"And very thankful I am they *are* standing," she said; "for that means they 'll turn middling time this week."

"But I like the feel of *men* on things, while they are alive. There 's a feel of men about trucks, because they have been handled with men's hands, all of them."

"Yes," said Mrs. Morel.

They went along under the trees of the highroad. Paul was constantly informing her, but she was interested. They passed the end of Nethermere, that was tossing its sunshine like petals lightly in its lap. Then they turned on a private road, and in some trepidation approached the big farm. A dog barked furiously. A woman came out to see.

"Is this the way to Willey Farm?" Mrs. Morel asked.

Paul hung behind in terror of being sent back. The woman was amiable, and directed them. The mother and son went through the wheat and oats, over a little bridge into a wild meadow. Peewits, with their white breasts glistening, wheeled and screamed about them. The lake was still and blue. High overhead a heron floated. Opposite, the wood heaped on the hill, green and still.

"It 's a wild road, mother," said Paul. "Just like Canada."

"Is n't it beautiful!" said Mrs. Morel, looking round.

"See that heron — see — see her legs?"

He directed his mother, what she must see and what she must not see. And she was quite content.

"But now," she said, "which way? He told me through the wood."

The wood, fenced and dark, lay on their left.

"I can feel a bit of a path this road," said Paul.

"You 've got town feet, somehow or other, you have."

They found a little gate, and soon were in a broad  
een alley of the wood, with a new thicket of fir and  
ie on one hand, an old oak glade dipping down on the  
her. And among the oaks the bluebells stood in pools  
azure, under the new green hazels, upon a pale fawn  
or of oak-leaves. He found flowers for her.

"Here's a bit of new-mown hay," he said; then, again,  
brought her forget-me-nots. And, again, his heart  
rt with love, seeing her hand, used with work, holding  
e little bunch of flowers he gave her. She was perfectly  
ppy.

But at the end of the riding was a fence to climb. Paul  
s over in a second.

"Come," he said, "let me help you."

"No, go away. I will do it in my own way."

He stood below with his hands up ready to help her.  
e climbed cautiously.

"What a way to climb!" he exclaimed scornfully, when  
e was safely to earth again.

"Hateful stiles!" she cried.

"Duffer of a little woman," he replied, "who can't get  
er 'em."

In front, along the edge of the wood, was a cluster of  
v red farm buildings. The two hastened forward.  
ush with the wood was the apple orchard, where blos-  
n was falling on the grindstone. The pond was deep  
der a hedge and overhanging oak-trees. Some cows  
od in the shade. The farm and buildings, three sides  
a quadrangle, embraced the sunshine towards the wood.  
was very still.

Mother and son went into the small v d garden.  
here was a scent of red gillivers. By the ten door  
ere some floury loaves, put out to cool. A her was  
st coming to peck them. Then, in the doorway sud-  
enly appeared a girl in a dirty apron. was about  
urteen years old, had a rosy dark face, a bunch o' short  
ack curls, very fine and free, and dark eyes; shy, ques-  
oning, a little resentful of the strangers, she disappeared

In a minute another figure appeared, a small, frail woman rosy, with great dark brown eyes.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, smiling with a little glow "you've come, then. I am glad to see you." Her voice was intimate and rather sad.

The two women shook hands.

"Now are you sure we're not a bother to you?" said Mrs. Morel. "I know what a farming life is."

"Oh no! We're only too thankful to see a new face it's so lost up here."

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Morel.

They were taken through into the parlour — a long low room, with a great bunch of guelder-roses in the fireplace. There the women talked, whilst Paul went out to survey the land. He was in the garden smelling the gillyflowers and looking at the plants, when the girl came out quickly to the heap of coal which stood by the fence.

"I suppose these are cabbage-roses?" he said to her pointing to the bushes along the fence.

She looked at him with startled, big brown eyes.

"I suppose they are cabbage-roses when they come out?" he said.

"I don't know," she faltered. "They're white with pink middles."

"Then they're maiden-blush."

Miriam flushed. She had a beautiful warm colouring.

"I don't know," she said.

"You don't have much in your garden," he said.

"This is our first year here," she answered, in a distant, rather superior way, drawing back and going indoors. He did not notice, but went his round of exploration. Presently his mother came out, and they went through the buildings. Paul was hugely delighted.

"And I suppose you have the fowls and calves and pigs to look after?" said Mrs. Morel to Mrs. Leivers.

"No," replied the little woman. "I can't find time to look after cattle, and I'm not used to it. It's as much as I can do to keep going in the house."

"Well, I suppose it is," said Mrs. Morel.

Sentently the girl came out.

"Tea is ready, mother," she said in a musical, quiet

"Thank you, Miriam, then we'll come," replied her mother, almost ingratiatingly. "Would you care to have tea with us, Mrs. Morel?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Morel. "Whenever it's ready."

Paul and his mother and Mrs. Leivers had tea together.

Then they went out into the wood that was full of bluebells, while fumy forget-me-nots were in flower. The mother and son were in ecstasy together. When they got back to the house, Mr. Leivers and his wife, the eldest son, were in the kitchen. Edgar was eighteen. Then Geoffrey and Maurice, big lads of fifteen and thirteen, were in from school. Mr. Leivers, a good-looking man in the prime of life, with a golden-moustache, and blue eyes screwed up against the sun.

The boys were condescending, but Paul scarcely noticed it. They went round for eggs, scrambling into all sorts of places. As they were feeding the fowls a hen came out. The boys took no notice of her. One of them, with her yellow chickens, was in a coop. Maurice took a hand full of corn and let the hen peck from it. "What would you do if I burst you do it?" he asked of Paul.

"I'd see," said Paul.

He had a small hand, warm, and rather capable-looking. He watched. He held the corn to the hen. The bird pecked at it with her hard, bright eye, and suddenly made a snap at his hand. He started, and laughed. "Rap, rap!" went the bird's beak in his palm. He laughed again, and the other boys joined.

"She knocks you, and nips you, but she never hurts," said Paul, when the last corn had gone.

"Now, Miriam," said Maurice, "you come an' 'ave a look," she cried, shrinking back.

"Ha! baby. The mardy-kid!" said her brothers.

"It does n't hurt a bit," said Paul. "It only just nips rather nicely."

"No," she still cried, shaking her black curls and shrinking.

"She durs n't," said Geoffrey. "She niver durst do anything except recite poitry."

"Durs n't jump off a gate, durs n't tweedle, durs n't go on a slide, durs n't stop a girl hittin' her. She can do nowt but go about thinkin' herself somebody. 'The Lady of the Lake.' Yah!" cried Maurice.

Miriam was crimson with shame and misery.

"I dare do more than you," she cried. "You're never anything but cowards and bullies."

"Oh, cowards and bullies!" they repeated, mincingly mocking her speech.

"Not such a clown shall anger me,  
A boor is answered silently"

he quoted against her, shouting with laughter.

She went indoors. Paul went with the boys into the orchard, where they had rigged up a parallel bar. They did feats of strength. He was more agile than strong, but it served. He fingered a piece of apple-blossom that hung low on a swinging bough.

"I would n't get the apple-blossom," said Edgar, the eldest brother. "There'll be no apples next year."

"I was n't going to get it," replied Paul, going away.

The boys felt hostile to him; they were more interested in their own pursuits. He wandered back to the house to look for his mother. As he went round the back, he saw Miriam kneeling in front of the hen-coop, some maize in her hand, biting her lip, and crouching in an intense attitude. The hen was eyeing her wickedly. Very gingerly she put forward her hand. The hen bobbed for her. She drew back quickly with a cry, half of fear, half of chagrin.

"It won't hurt you," said Paul.

She flushed crimson and started up.

"I only wanted to try," she said in a low voice.

"See, it does n't hurt," he said, and, putting only two corns in his palm, he let the hen peck, peck, peck at his bare hand. "It only makes you laugh," he said.

She put her hand forward, and dragged it away, tried again, and started back with a cry. He frowned.

"Why, I'd let her take corn from my face," said Paul, "only she bumps a bit. She's ever so neat. If she was n't, look how much ground she'd peck up every day."

He waited grimly, and watched. At last Miriam let the bird peck from her hand. She gave a little cry — fear, and pain because of fear — rather pathetic. But she had done it, and she did it again.

"There, you see," said the boy. "It does n't hurt, does it?"

She looked at him with dilated dark eyes.

"No," she laughed, trembling.

Then she rose and went indoors. She seemed to be in some way resentful of the boy.

"He thinks I'm only a common girl," she thought, and she wanted to prove she was a grand person like the "Lady of the Lake."

Paul found his mother ready to go home. She smiled on her son. He took the great bunch of flowers. Mr. and Mrs. Leivers walked down the fields with them. The hills were golden with evening; deep in the wood showed the darkening purple of bluebells. It was everywhere perfectly still, save for the rustling of leaves and birds.

"But it is a beautiful place," said Mrs. Morel.

"Yes," answered Mr. Leivers; "it's a nice little place, if only it were n't for the rabbits. The pasture's bitten down to nothing. I dunno if ever I s'll get the rent off it."

He clapped his hands, and the field broke into motion near the woods, brown rabbits hopping everywhere.

"Would you believe it!" exclaimed Mrs. Morel.

She and Paul went on alone together.

"Was n't it lovely, mother?" he said quietly.

A thin moon was coming out. His heart was full of happiness till it hurt. His mother had to chatter, because she, too, wanted to cry with happiness.

"Now *would n't* I help that man!" she said. "Would *n't* I see to the fowls and the young stock. And *I'd* learn to milk, and *I'd* talk with him, and *I'd* plan with him. My word, if I were his wife, the farm would be run, I know! But there, she has *n't* the strength — she simply has *n't* the strength. She ought never to have been burdened like it, you know. I'm sorry for her, and I'm sorry for him too. My word, if *I'd* had him, I should *n't* have thought him a bad husband! Not that she does either; and she's very lovable."

William came home again with his sweetheart at the Whitsuntide. He had one week of his holidays then. It was beautiful weather. As a rule, William and Lily and Paul went out in the morning together for a walk. William did not talk to his beloved much, except to tell her things from his boyhood. Paul talked endlessly to both of them. They lay down, all three, in a meadow by Minton Church. On one side, by the Castle Farm, was a beautiful quivering screen of poplars. Hawthorn was dropping from the hedges; penny daisies and ragged robin were in the field, like laughter. William, a big fellow of twenty-three, thinner now and even a bit gaunt, lay back in the sunshine and dreamed, while she fingered with his hair. Paul went gathering the big daisies. She had taken off her hat; her hair was black as a horse's mane. Paul came back and threaded daisies in her jet-black hair — big spangles of white and yellow, and just a pink touch of ragged robin.

"Now you look like a young witch-woman," the boy said to her. "Does *n't* she, William?"

Lily laughed. William opened his eyes and looked at her. In his gaze was a certain baffled look of misery and fierce appreciation.

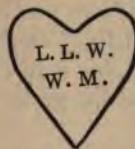
"*Has he made a sight of me?*" she asked, laughing down on her lover.

That he has!" said William, smiling.

He looked at her. Her beauty seemed to hurt him. He ached at her flower-decked head and frowned.

"You look nice enough, if that's what you want to w," he said.

and she walked without her hat. In a little while William recovered, and was rather tender to her. Coming to a bridge, he carved her initials and his in a heart.



She watched his strong, nervous hand, with its glistening hairs and freckles, as he carved, and she seemed fascinated by it.

All the time there was a feeling of sadness and warmth, a certain tenderness in the house, whilst William and they were at home. But often he got irritable. She had bought, for an eight-days' stay, five dresses and six pairs of stockings.

"Oh, would you mind," she said to Annie, "washing me two blouses, and these things?"

And Annie stood washing when William and Lily went to the next morning. Mrs. Morel was furious. And sometimes the young man, catching a glimpse of his sweet-sister's attitude towards his sister, hated her.

On Sunday morning she looked very beautiful in a dress of foulard, silky and sweeping, and blue as a jay-bird's feather, and in a large cream hat covered with many roses, slightly crimson. Nobody could admire her enough. But in the evening, when she was going out, she asked again: "Chubby, have you got my gloves?"

"Which?" asked William.

"My new black *sûède*."

"No."

There was a hunt. She had lost them.

"Look here, mother," said William, "that's the fourth pair she's lost since Christmas — at five shillings a pair!"

"You only gave me *two* of them," she remonstrated.

And in the evening, after supper, he stood on the hearthrug whilst she sat on the sofa, and he seemed to hate her. In the afternoon he had left her whilst he went to see some old friend. She had sat looking at a book. After supper William wanted to write a letter.

"Here is your book, Lily," said Mrs. Morel. "Would you care to go on with it for a few minutes?"

"No, thank you," said the girl. "I will sit still."

"But it is so dull."

William scribbled irritably at a great rate. As he sealed the envelope he said:

"Read a book! Why, she's never read a book in her life!"

"Oh, go along!" said Mrs. Morel, cross with the exaggeration.

"It's true, mother — she has n't," he cried, jumping up and taking his old position on the hearthrug. "She's never read a book in her life."

"'Er's like me," chimed in Morel. "'Er canna see what there is i' books, ter sit borin' your nose in 'em for, nor more can I."

"But you should n't say these things," said Mrs. Morel to her son.

"But it's true, mother — she *can't* read. What did you give her?"

"Well, I gave her a little thing of Annie Swan's. Nobody wants to read dry stuff on Sunday afternoon."

"Well, I'll bet she did n't read ten lines of it."

"You are mistaken," said his mother.

All the time Lily sat miserably on the sofa. He turned to her swiftly.

"Did you read any?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," she replied.

"How much?"

"I don't know how many pages."

"Tell me *one thing* you read."

She could not.

She never got beyond the second page. He read a great deal, and had a quick, active intelligence. She could understand nothing but love-making and chatter. He was accustomed to having all his thoughts sifted through his mother's mind; so, when he wanted companionship, and was asked in reply to be the billing and twittering lover, he hated his betrothed.

"You know, mother," he said, when he was alone with her at night, "she's no idea of money, she's so wessel-brained. When she's paid, she'll suddenly buy such rot as *marrons glacés*, and then *I* have to buy her season-ticket, and her extras, even her underclothing. And she wants to get married, and I think myself we might as well get married next year. But at this rate — "

"A fine mess of a marriage it would be," replied his mother. "I should consider it again, my boy."

"Oh, well, I've gone too far to break off now," he said, "and so I shall get married as soon as I can."

"Very well, my boy. If you will, you will, and there's no stopping you; but I tell you, *I* can't sleep when I think about it."

"Oh, she'll be all right, mother. We shall manage."

"And she lets you buy her underclothing?" asked the mother.

"Well," he began apologetically, "she did n't ask me; but one morning — and it *was* cold — I found her on the station shivering, not able to keep still; so I asked her if she was well wrapped up. She said: 'I think so.' So I said: 'Have you got warm underthings on?' And she said: 'No, they are cotton.' I asked her why on earth she had n't got something thicker on in weather like that, and she said because she *had* nothing. And there she is — a bronchial subject! I *had* to take her and get some warm things. Well, mother, I should n't mind the money if we had any. *And, you know, she ought to keep enou-*

to pay for her season-ticket; but no, she comes to me about that, and I have to find the money."

"It's a poor lookout," said Mrs. Morel bitterly.

He was pale, and his rugged face, that used to be so perfectly careless and laughing, was stamped with conflict and despair.

"But I can't give her up now; it's gone too far," he said. "And, besides, for *some* things I could n't do without her."

"My boy, remember you're taking your life in your hands," said Mrs. Morel. "*Nothing* is as bad as a marriage that's a hopeless failure. Mine was bad enough, God knows, and ought to teach you something; but it might have been worse by a long chalk."

He leaned with his back against the side of the chimney-piece, his hands in his pockets. He was a big, raw-boned man, who looked as if he would go to the world's end if he wanted to. But she saw the despair on his face.

"I could n't give her up now," he said.

"Well," she said, "remember there are worse wrongs than breaking off an engagement."

"I can't give her up *now*," he said.

The clock ticked on; mother and son remained in silence, a conflict between them; but he would say no more. At last she said:

"Well, go to bed, my son. You'll feel better in the morning, and perhaps you'll know better."

He kissed her, and went. She raked the fire. Her heart was heavy now as it had never been. Before, with her husband, things had seemed to be breaking down in her, but they did not destroy her power to live. Now her soul felt lamed in itself. It was her hope that was struck.

And so often William manifested the same hatred towards his betrothed. On the last evening at home he was railing against her.

"Well," he said, "if you don't believe me, what she's like, would you believe she has been confirmed three times?"

"Nonsense!" laughed Mrs. Morel.

"Nonsense or not, she *has!* That's what confirmation means for her — a bit of a theatrical show where she can cut a figure."

"I have n't, Mrs. Morel!" cried the girl — "I have n't! it is not true!"

"What!" he cried, flashing round on her. "Once in Bromley, once in Beckenham, and once somewhere else."

"Nowhere else!" she said, in tears — "nowhere else!"

"It *was!* And if it was n't, why were you confirmed twice?"

"Once I was only fourteen, Mrs. Morel," she pleaded, tears in her eyes.

"Yes," said Mrs. Morel; "I can quite understand it, child. Take no notice of him. You ought to be ashamed, William, saying such things."

"But it's true. She's religious — she has blue velvet Prayer-Books — and she's not as much religion, or anything else, in her than that table-leg. Gets confirmed three times for show, to show herself off, and that's how she is in *everything* — *everything!*"

The girl sat on the sofa, crying. She was not strong.

"As for *love!*" he cried, "you might as well ask a fly to love you! It'll love settling on you —"

"Now, say no more," commanded Mrs. Morel. "If you want to say these things, you must find another place than this. I am ashamed of you, William! Why don't you be more manly? To do nothing but find fault with a girl, and then pretend you're engaged to her!"

Mrs. Morel subsided in wrath and indignation.

William was silent, and later he repented, kissed and comforted the girl. Yet it was true, what he had said. He hated her.

When they were going away, Mrs. Morel accompanied them as far as Nottingham. It was a long way to Keston station.

"You know, mother," he said to her, "Gyp's shallow. Nothing goes deep with her."

"William, I *wish* you would n't say these things," said Mrs. Morel, very uncomfortable for the girl who walked beside her.

"But it does n't, mother. She's very much in love with me *now*, but if I died she'd have forgotten me in three months."

Mrs. Morel was afraid. Her heart beat furiously, hearing the quiet bitterness of her son's last speech.

"How do you know?" she replied. "You *don't* know, and therefore you've no right to say such a thing."

"He's always saying these things!" cried the girl.

"In three months after I was buried you'd have somebody else, and I should be forgotten," he said. "And that's your love!"

Mrs. Morel saw them into the train in Nottingham, then she returned home.

"There's one comfort," she said to Paul — "he'll never have any money to marry on, that I *am* sure of. And so she'll save him that way."

So she took cheer. Matters were not yet very desperate. She firmly believed William would never marry his Gipsy. She waited, and she kept Paul near to her.

All summer long William's letters had a feverish tone; he seemed unnatural and intense. Sometimes he was exaggeratedly jolly, usually he was flat and bitter in his letter.

"Ay," his mother said, "I'm afraid he's ruining himself against that creature, who is n't worthy of his love, — no, no more than a rag doll."

He wanted to come home. The midsummer holiday was gone; it was a long while to Christmas. He wrote in wild excitement, saying he could come for Saturday and Sunday at Goose Fair, the first week in October.

"You are not well, my boy," said his mother, when she saw him.

She was almost in tears at having him to herself again.

"No, I've not been well," he said. "I've seemed to

a dragging cold all the last month, but it's going, k."

was sunny October weather. He seemed wild with like a schoolboy escaped; then again he was silent eserved. He was more gaunt than ever, and there haggard look in his eyes.

"ou are doing too much," said his mother to him.  
was doing extra work, trying to make some money rry on, he said. He only talked to his mother on the Saturday night; then he was sad and tender his beloved.

nd yet, you know, mother, for all that, if I died be broken-hearted for two months, and then she'd to forget me. You'd see, she'd never come home o look at my grave, not even once."

"hy, William," said his mother, "you're not going , so why talk about it?"

ut whether or not — " he replied.

nd she can't help it. She is like that, and if you e her — well, you can't grumble," said his mother. the Sunday morning, as he was putting his collar on: ook," he said to his mother, holding up his chin, t a rash my collar's made under my chin!"

t at the junction of chin and throat was a big red mation.

ought not to do that," said his mother. "Here, bit of this soothing ointment on. You should wear nt collars."

went away on Sunday midnight, seeming better and solid for his two days at home.

Tuesday morning came a telegram from London e was ill. Mrs. Morel got off her knees from wash-e floor, read the telegram, called a neighbour, went landlady and borrowed a sovereign, put on her , and set off. She hurried to Keston, caught an s for London in Nottingham. She had to wait in gham nearly an hour. A small figure in her black , she was anxiously asking the porters if they knew

how to get to Elmers End. The journey was three hours. She sat in her corner in a kind of stupor, never moving. At King's Cross still no one could tell her how to get to Elmers End. Carrying her string bag, that contained her nightdress, comb and brush, she went from person to person. At last they sent her underground to Cannon Street.

It was six o'clock when she arrived at William's lodgings. The blinds were not down.

"How is he?" she asked.

"No better," said the landlady.

She followed the woman upstairs. William lay on the bed, with bloodshot eyes, his face rather discoloured. The clothes were tossed about, there was no fire in the room, a glass of milk stood on the stand at his bedside. No one had been with him.

"Why, my son!" said the mother bravely.

He did not answer. He looked at her, but did not see her. Then he began to say, in a dull voice, as if repeating a letter from dictation: "Owing to a leakage in the hold of this vessel, the sugar had set, and become converted into rock. It needed hacking —"

He was quite unconscious. It had been his business to examine some such cargo of sugar in the Port of London.

"How long has he been like this?" the mother asked the landlady.

"He got home at six o'clock on Monday morning, and he seemed to sleep all day; then in the night we heard him talking, and this morning he asked for you. So I wired, and we fetched the doctor."

"Will you have a fire made?"

Mrs. Morel tried to soothe her son, to keep him still.

The doctor came. It was pneumonia, and, he said, a peculiar erysipelas, which had started under the chin where the collar chafed, and was spreading over the face. He hoped it would not get to the brain.

*Mrs. Morel settled down to nurse. She prayed for William, prayed that he would recognize her. But t*

young man's face grew more discoloured. In the night she struggled with him. He raved, and raved, and would not come to consciousness. At two o'clock, in a dreadful paroxysm, he died.

Mrs. Morel sat perfectly still for an hour in the lodging bedroom; then she roused the household.

At six o'clock, with the aid of the charwoman, she laid him out; then she went round the dreary London village to the registrar and the doctor.

At nine o'clock to the cottage on Scargill Street came another wire:

"William died last night. Let father come, bring money."

Annie, Paul, and Arthur were at home; Mr. Morel was gone to work. The three children said not a word. Annie began to whimper with fear; Paul set off for his father.

It was a beautiful day. At Brinsley pit the white team melted slowly in the sunshine of a soft blue sky; the wheels of the headstocks twinkled high up; the screen, huffing its coal into the trucks, made a busy noise.

"I want my father; he's got to go to London," said the boy to the first man he met on the bank.

"Tha wants Walter Morel? Go in theer an' tell Joe Ward."

Paul went into the little top office.

"I want my father; he's got to go to London."

"Thy feyther? Is he down? What's his name?"

"Mr. Morel."

"What, Walter? Is owt amiss?"

"He's got to go to London."

The man went to the telephone and rang up the bottom office.

"Walter Morel's wanted. Number 42, Hard. Summat's amiss; there's his lad here."

Then he turned round to Paul.

"He'll be up in a few minutes," he said.

Paul wandered out to the pit-top. He watched th-

chair come up, with its waggon of coal. The great iron cage sank back on its rest, a full carfle was hauled off, an empty tram run on to the chair, a bell ting'd somewhere, the chair heaved, then dropped like a stone.

Paul did not realize William was dead; it was impossible, with such a bustle going on. The puller-off swung the small truck on to the turn-table, another man ran with it along the bank down the curving lines.

"And William is dead, and my mother's in London, and what will she be doing?" the boy asked himself, as if it were a conundrum.

He watched chair after chair come up, and still no father. At last, standing beside a waggon, a man's form! The chair sank on its rests, Morel stepped off. He was slightly lame from an accident.

"Is it thee, Paul? Is 'e worse?"

"You've got to go to London."

The two walked off the pit-bank, where men were watching curiously. As they came out and went along the railway, with the sunny autumn field on one side and a wall of trucks on the other, Morel said in a frightened voice:

"'E's niver gone, child?"

"Yes."

"When wor 't?"

The miner's voice was terrified.

"Last night. We had a telegram from my mother."

Morel walked on a few strides, then leaned up against a truck side, his hand over his eyes. He was not crying. Paul stood looking round, waiting. On the weighing machine a truck trundled slowly. Paul saw everything, except his father leaning against the truck as if he were tired.

Morel had only once before been to London. He set off, scared and peaked, to help his wife. That was on Tuesday. The children were left alone in the house. Paul went to work, Arthur went to school, and Annie had in a friend to be with her.

Saturday night, as Paul was turning the corner, home from Keston, he saw his mother and father, and come to Sethley Bridge Station. They were g in silence in the dark, tired, straggling apart. y waited.

other!" he said, in the darkness.

Morel's small figure seemed not to observe. He again.

ul!" she said, uninterestedly.

let him kiss her, but she seemed unaware of him. he house she was the same—small, white, and She noticed nothing, she said nothing, only:

the coffin will be here to-night, Walter. You'd better about some help." Then, turning to the children: "We're bringing him home."

she relapsed into the same mute looking into her hands folded on her lap. Paul, looking at it he could not breathe. The house was dead

vent to work, mother," he said plaintively.

"d you?" she answered dully.

er half an hour Morel, troubled and bewildered, n again.

heer s'll we ha'e him when he *does* come?" he asked e.

the front room."

en I 'd better shift th' table?"

s."

" ha'e him across th' chairs?"

"u know there — Yes, I suppose so."

el and Paul went, with a candle, into the parlour. was no gas there. The father unscrewed the top big mahogany oval table, and cleared the middle of om; then he arranged six chairs opposite each so that the coffin could stand on their beds.

"u never seed such a length as he is!" said the and watching anxiously as he worked.

went to the bay window and looked out. The ash-

tree stood monstrous and black in front of the wide darkness. It was a faintly luminous night. Paul went back to his mother.

At ten o'clock Morel called:

"He's here!"

Everyone started. There was a noise of unbarring and unlocking the front door, which opened straight from the night into the room.

"Bring another candle," called Morel.

Annie and Arthur went. Paul followed with his mother. He stood with his arm round her waist in the inner doorway. Down the middle of the cleared room waited six chairs, face to face. In the window, against the lace curtains, Arthur held up one candle, and by the open door, against the night, Annie stood leaning forward, her brass candlestick glittering.

There was the noise of wheels. Outside in the darkness of the street below Paul could see horses and a black vehicle, one lamp, and a few pale faces; then some men, miners, all in their shirt-sleeves, seemed to struggle in the obscurity. Presently two men appeared, bowed beneath a great weight. It was Morel and his neighbour.

"Steady!" called Morel, out of breath.

He and his fellow mounted the steep garden step, heaved into the candle-light with their gleaming coffin-end. Limbs of other men were seen struggling behind. Morel and Burns, in front, staggered; the great dark weight swayed.

"Steady, steady!" cried Morel, as if in pain.

All the six bearers were up in the small garden, holding the great coffin aloft. There were three more steps to the door. The yellow lamp of the carriage shone alone down in the black road.

"Now then!" said Morel.

*The coffin swayed, the men began to mount the three steps with their load. Annie's candle flickered, and she whimpered as the first men appeared, and the limbs of the bowed heads of six men struggled to climb into the room.*

aring the coffin that rode like sorrow on their living sh.

"Oh, my son — my son!" Mrs. Morel sang softly, and ch time the coffin swung to the unequal climbing of the n: "Oh, my son — my son — my son!"

"Mother!" Paul whimpered, his hand round her waist. Mother!"

She did not hear.

"Oh, my son — my son!" she repeated.

Paul saw drops of sweat fall from his father's brow. men were in the room — six coatless men, with yield-  
g, struggling limbs, filling the room and knocking against e furniture. The coffin veered, and was gently lowered to the chairs. The sweat fell from Morel's face on boards.

"My word, he 's a weight!" said a man, and the five ners sighed, bowed, and, trembling with the struggle, scended the steps again, closing the door behind em.

The family was alone in the parlour with the great lished box. William, when laid out, was six feet four 'es long. Like a monument lay the bright brown, derous coffin. Paul thought it would never be got t of the room again. His mother was stroking the lished wood.

They buried him on the Monday in the little cemetary the hillside that looks over the fields at the big church d the houses. It was sunny, and the white chrysanthemums frilled themselves in the warmth.

Mrs. Morel could not be persuaded, after this, to talk d take her old bright interest in life. She remained t off. All the way home in the train she had said to self: "If only it could have been me!"

When Paul came home at night he found his mother ting, her day's work done, with hands folded in her lap on her coarse apron. She always used to have changed dress and put on a black apron, before. Now Annie his supper, and his mother sat looking blankly ;

front of her, her mouth shut tight. Then he beat his brains for news to tell her.

"Mother, Miss Jordan was down to-day, and she said my sketch of a colliery at work was beautiful."

But Mrs. Morel took no notice. Night after night he forced himself to tell her things, although she did not listen. It drove him almost insane to have her thus. At last:

"What's a-matter, mother?" he asked.

She did not hear.

"What's a-matter?" he persisted. "Mother, what's a-matter?"

"You know what's the matter," she said irritably, turning away.

The lad — he was sixteen years old — went to bed drearily. He was cut off and wretched through October, November, and December. His mother tried, but she could not rouse herself. She could only brood on her dead son; he had been let to die so cruelly.

At last, on December 23, with his five shillings Christmas-box in his pocket, Paul wandered blindly home. His mother looked at him, and her heart stood still.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"I'm badly, mother!" he replied. "Mr. Jordan gave me five shillings for a Christmas-box!"

He handed it to her with trembling hands. She put it on the table.

"You are n't glad!" he reproached her; but he trembled violently.

"Where hurts you?" she said, unbuttoning his overcoat.

It was the old question.

"I feel badly, mother."

She undressed him and put him to bed. He had pneumonia dangerously, the doctor said.

"Might he never have had it if I'd kept him at home — not let him go to Nottingham?" was one of the first things she asked.

"He might not have been so bad," said the doctor.

Mrs. Morel stood condemned on her own ground.

"I should have watched the living, not the dead," she told herself.

Paul was very ill. His mother lay in bed at nights with him; they could not afford a nurse. He grew worse, and the crisis approached. One night he tossed into consciousness in the ghastly, sickly feeling of dissolution, when all the cells in the boy seem in intense irritability to be breaking down, and consciousness makes a last flare of struggle, like madness.

"I s'll die, mother!" he cried, heaving for breath on the pillow.

She lifted him up, crying in a small voice:

"Oh, my son — my son!"

That brought him to. He realized her. His whole will rose up and arrested him. He put his head on her breast, and took ease of her for love.

"For some things," said his aunt, "it was a good thing Paul was ill that Christmas. I believe it saved his mother."

Paul was in bed for seven weeks. He got up white and fragile. His father had bought him a pot of scarlet and gold tulips. They used to flame in the window in the March sunshine as he sat on the sofa chattering to his mother. The two knitted together in perfect intimacy. Mrs. Morel's life now rooted itself in Paul.

William had been a prophet. Mrs. Morel had a little present and a letter from Lily at Christmas. Mrs. Morel's sister had a letter at the New Year.

"I was at a ball last night. Some delightful people were there, and I enjoyed myself thoroughly," said the letter. "I had every dance — did not sit out one."

Mrs. Morel never heard any more of her.

Morel and his wife were gentle with each other for some time after the death of their son. He would go into a kind of daze, staring wide-eyed and blank across the room.

boots of her brothers. She madly wanted her little brother of four to let her swathe him and stifle him in her love; she went to church reverently, with bowed head, and quivered in anguish from the vulgarity of the other choir-girls and from the common-sounding voice of the curate; she fought with her brothers, whom she considered brutal louts; and she held not her father in too high esteem because he did not carry any mystical ideals cherished in his heart, but only wanted to have as easy a time as he could, and his meals when he was ready for them.

She hated her position as swine-girl. She wanted to be considered. She wanted to learn, thinking that if she could read, as Paul said he could read, "Colomba," or the "Voyage autour de ma Chambre," the world would have a different face for her and a deepened respect. She could not be princess by wealth or standing. So she was mad to have learning whereon to pride herself. For she was different from other folk, and must not be scooped up among the common fry. Learning was the only distinction to which she thought to aspire.

Her beauty — that of a shy, wild, quiveringly sensitive thing — seemed nothing to her. Even her soul, so strong for rhapsody, was not enough. She must have something to reinforce her pride, because she felt different from other people. Paul she eyed rather wistfully. On the whole, she scorned the male sex. But here was a new specimen, quick, light, graceful, who could be gentle and who could be sad, and who was clever, and who knew a lot, and who had a death in the family. The boy's poor morsel of learning exalted him almost sky-high in her esteem. Yet she tried hard to scorn him, because he would not see in her the princess but only the swine-girl. And he scarcely observed her.

Then he was so ill, and she felt he would be weak. Then she would be stronger than he. Then she could love him. If she could be mistress of him in his weakness, *take care of him*, if he could depend on her, if she could, *s it were*, have him in her arms, how she would love him!

as the skies brightened and plum-blossom was drove off in the milkman's heavy float up to town. Mr. Leivers shouted in a kindly fashion, then clicked to the horse as they climbed the hill, in the freshness of the morning. White clouds went their way, crowding to the back of the hills that hung in the springtime. The water of Nethermere shone very blue against the seared meadows and the hills.

four and a half miles' drive. Tiny buds on the trees were vivid as copper-green, were opening into rosettes; thrushes called, and blackbirds shrieked and scolded. A new, glamorous world.

Peeping through the kitchen window, saw the man pass through the big white gate into the farmyard backed by the oak-wood, still bare. Then a tall, heavy overcoat climbed down. He put up his umbrella and the whip and the rug that the good-looking, slender handed down to him.

Miriam appeared in the doorway. She was nearly six feet tall, beautiful, with her warm colouring, her gravity, radiating suddenly like an ecstasy.

"Good morning," said Paul, turning shyly aside, "your daffodils are early out. Is n't it early? But don't they look

"Good morning," said Miriam, in her musical, caressing voice. "The daffodils are green on their buds —" and he faltered into silence.

"I'll take the rug," said Miriam over-gently. "I'll carry it," he answered, rather injured. But he gave it to her.

Mrs. Leivers appeared.

"Are you're tired and cold," she said. "Let me give you my coat. It is heavy. You must n't walk far in it." She undressed him off with his coat. He was quite unused to such attention. She was almost smothered under its warmth.

"Good morning, mother," laughed the farmer as he passed

through the kitchen, swinging the great milk-churns, "you've got almost more than you can manage there."

She beat up the sofa cushions for the youth.

The kitchen was very small and irregular. The farm had been originally a labourer's cottage. And the furniture was old and battered. But Paul loved it — loved the sack-bag that formed the hearthrug, and the funny little corner under the stairs, and the small window deep in the corner, through which, bending a little, he could see the plum-trees in the back-garden and the lovely round hills beyond.

"Won't you lie down?" said Mrs. Leivers.

"Oh no; I'm not tired," he said. "Is n't it lovely coming out, don't you think? I saw a sloe-bush in blossom and a lot of celandines. I'm glad it's sunny."

"Can I give you anything to eat or to drink?"

"No, thank you."

"How's your mother?"

"I think she's tired now. I think she's had too much to do. Perhaps in a little while she'll go to Skegness with me. Then she'll be able to rest. I s'll be glad if she can."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Leivers. "It's a wonder she is n't ill herself."

Miriam was moving about preparing dinner. Paul watched everything that happened. His face was pale and thin, but his eyes were quick and bright with life as ever. He watched the strange, almost rhapsodic way in which the girl moved about, carrying a great stew-jar to the oven, or looking in the saucepan. The atmosphere was different from that of his own home, where everything seemed so ordinary. When Mr. Leivers called loudly outside to the horse, that was reaching over to feed on the rose-bushes in the garden, the girl started, looked round with dark eyes, as if something had come breaking in on her world. There was a sense of silence inside the house and out. Miriam seemed as in some dreamy tale, a maiden in bondage, her spirit dreaming in a land far away and

cal. And her discoloured, old blue frock and her  
en boots seemed only like the romantic rags of King  
uetua's beggar-maid.

e suddenly became aware of his keen blue eyes upon  
taking her all in. Instantly her broken boots and her  
ed old frock hurt her. She resented his seeing every-  
;. Even he knew that her stocking was not pulled up.  
went into the scullery, blushing deeply. And after-  
s her hands trembled slightly at her work. She  
y dropped all she handled. When her inside dream  
shaken, her body quivered with trepidation. She re-  
d that he saw so much.

rs. Leivers sat for some time talking to the boy,  
ugh she was needed at her work. She was too polite  
ave him. Presently she excused herself and rose.  
r a while she looked into the tin saucepan.

Oh dear, Miriam," she cried, "these potatoes have  
d dry!"

riam started as if she had been stung.

*Have they, mother?*" she cried.

I should n't care, Miriam," said the mother, "if I  
t trusted them to you." She peered into the pan.  
e girl stiffened as if from a blow. Her dark eyes  
ed; she remained standing in the same spot.

Well," she answered, gripped tight in self-conscious-  
e, "I 'm sure I looked at them five minutes since."

Yes," said the mother, "I know it 's easily done."

They 're not much burned," said Paul. "It does n't  
er, does it?"

rs. Leivers looked at the youth with her brown, hurt-

It would n't matter but for the boys," she said to him.  
ly Miriam knows what a trouble they make if the  
toes are 'caught.'"

Then," thought Paul to himself, "you should n't let  
make a trouble."

fter a while Edgar came in. He wore leggings, and  
oots were *covered* with earth. He was rather small,

rather formal, for a farmer. He glanced at Paul, nodded to him distantly, and said:

"Dinner ready?"

"Nearly, Edgar," replied the mother apologetically.

"I'm ready for mine," said the young man, taking up the newspaper and reading. Presently the rest of the family trooped in. Dinner was served. The meal went rather brutally. The over-gentleness and apologetic tone of the mother brought out all the brutality of manner in the sons. Edgar tasted the potatoes, moved his mouth quickly like a rabbit, looked indignantly at his mother, and said:

"These potatoes are burnt, mother."

"Yes, Edgar. I forgot them for a minute. Perhaps you'll have bread if you can't eat them."

Edgar looked in anger across at Miriam.

"What was Miriam doing that she could n't attend to them?" he said.

Miriam looked up. Her mouth opened, her dark eyes blazed and winced, but she said nothing. She swallowed her anger and her shame, bowing her dark head.

"I'm sure she was trying hard," said the mother.

"She has n't got sense even to boil the potatoes," said Edgar. "What is she kept at home for?"

"On'y for eating everything that's left in th' pantry," said Maurice.

"They don't forget that potato-pie against our Miriam," laughed the father.

She was utterly humiliated. The mother sat in silence, suffering, like some saint out of place at the brutal board.

It puzzled Paul. He wondered vaguely why all this intense feeling went running because of a few burnt potatoes. The mother exalted everything—even a bit of housework—to the plane of a religious trust. The sons resented this; they felt themselves cut away underneath, and they answered with brutality and also with sneering superciliousness.

*Paul was just opening out from childhood into manhood.*

This atmosphere, where everything took a religious hue, came with a subtle fascination to him. There was something in the air. His own mother was logical. Here he was something different, something he loved, something that at times he hated.

Miriam quarrelled with her brothers fiercely. Later in afternoon, when they had gone away again, her mother said:

"You disappointed me at dinner-time, Miriam."

The girl dropped her head.

"They are such *brutes!*" she suddenly cried, looking with flashing eyes.

"But hadn't you promised not to answer them?" said the mother. "And I believed in you. I can't stand it if you wrangle."

"But they're so hateful!" cried Miriam, "and — and —"

"Yes, dear. But how often have I asked you not to bring Edgar back? Can't you let him say what he likes?"

"But why should he say what he likes?"  
Are n't you strong enough to bear it, Miriam, if even for my sake? Are you so weak that you must wrangle with them?"

Mrs. Leivers stuck unflinchingly to this doctrine of the other cheek." She could not instil it at all into the boys. With the girls she succeeded better, and Miriam was the child of her heart. The boys loathed the other cheek when it was presented to them. Miriam was often sufficiently lofty to turn it. Then they spat on her and spat at her. But she walked in her proud humility, living in herself.

There was always this feeling of jangle and discord in the Leivers family. Although the boys resented so bitterly the eternal appeal to their deeper feelings of resignation and proud humility, yet it had its effect on them. They did not establish between themselves and an outsider the ordinary human feeling and unexaggerated

friendship; they were always restless for the something deeper. Ordinary folk seemed shallow to them, trivial and inconsiderable. And so they were unaccustomed, painfully uncouth in the simplest social intercourse, suffering, and yet insolent in their superiority. Then beneath was the yearning for the soul-intimacy to which they could not attain because they were too dumb, and every approach to close connection was blocked by their clumsy contempt of other people. They wanted genuine intimacy, but they could not get even normally near to anyone, because they scorned to take the first steps, they scorned the triviality which forms common human intercourse.

Paul fell under Mrs. Leiver's spell. Everything had a religious and intensified meaning when he was with her. His soul, hurt, highly developed, sought her as if for nourishment. Together they seemed to sift the vital fact from an experience.

Miriam was her mother's daughter. In the sunshine of the afternoon mother and daughter went down the fields with him. They looked for nests. There was a jenny wren's in the hedge by the orchard.

"I do want you to see this," said Mrs. Leivers.

He crouched down and carefully put his finger through the thorns into the round door of the nest.

"It's almost as if you were feeling inside the live body of the bird," he said, "it's so warm. They say a bird makes its nest round like a cup with pressing its breast on it. Then how did it make the ceiling round, I wonder?"

The nest seemed to start into life for the two women. After that, Miriam came to see it every day. It seemed so close to her. Again, going down the hedgeside with the girl, he noticed the celandines, scalloped splashes of gold, on the side of the ditch.

"I like them," he said, "when their petals go flat back with the sunshine. They seem to be pressing themselves at the sun."

*And then the celandines ever after drew her with a little spell. Anthropomorphic as she was, she stimulated him*

eciating things thus, and then they lived for her. She used to need things kindling in her imagination or real before she felt she had them. And she was won from ordinary life by her religious intensity which made the world for her either a nunnery garden or a place where sin and knowledge were not, or else an angel thing.

was in this atmosphere of subtle intimacy, this in their common feeling for something in nature, that love started.

ally, he was a long time before he realized her. For months he had to stay at home after his illness. While he went to Skegness with his mother, and was happy. But even from the seaside he wrote long letters to Mrs. Leivers about the shore and the sea. And sent back his beloved sketches of the flat Lincolnshire coast for them to see. Almost they would interfere more than they interested his mother. It was his art Mrs. Morel cared about; it was himself that achievement. But Mrs. Leivers and her children were his disciples. They kindled him and made him to his work, whereas his mother's influence was him quietly determined, patient, dogged, un-

conscious friends with the boys, whose rudeness was superficial. They had all, when they could trust him, a strange gentleness and lovable ness.

"you come with me on to the fallow?" asked father hesitatingly.

went joyfully, and spent the afternoon helping to single turnips with his friend. He used to lie three brothers in the hay piled up in the barn, between about Nottingham and about Jordan's. In they taught him to milk, and let him do little jobs ofing hay or pulping turnips — just as much as

At midsummer he worked all through hay with them, and then he loved them. The family cut off from the world, actually. They seemed

somehow, like "les derniers fils d'une race épuisée." Though the lads were strong and healthy, yet they had all that over-sensitiveness and hanging-back which made them so lonely, yet also such close, delicate friends once their intimacy was won. Paul loved them dearly, and they him.

Miriam came later. But he had come into her life before she made any mark on his. One dull afternoon, when the men were on the land and the rest at school, only Miriam and her mother at home, the girl said to him, after having hesitated for some time:

"Have you seen the swing?"

"No," he answered. "Where?"

"In the cowshed," she replied.

She always hesitated to offer or to show him anything. Men have such different standards of worth from women, and her dear things — the valuable things to her — her brothers had so often mocked or flouted.

"Come on, then," he replied, jumping up.

There were two cowsheds, one on either side of the barn. In the lower, darker shed there was standing for four cows. Hens flew scolding over the manger-wall as the youth and girl went forward for the great thick rope which hung from the beam in the darkness overhead, and was pushed back over a peg in the wall.

"It's something like a rope!" he exclaimed appreciatively; and he sat down on it, anxious to try it. Then immediately he rose.

"Come on, then, and have first go," he said to the girl.

"See," she answered, going into the barn, "we put some bags on the seat"; and she made the swing comfortable for him. That gave her pleasure. He held the rope.

"Come on, then," he said to her.

"No, I won't go first," she answered.

She stood aside in her still, aloof fashion.

"Why?"

"*You go,*" she pleaded.

*Almost for the first time in her life she had the pleasure*

ng up to a man, of spoiling him. Paul looked at

right," he said, sitting down. "Mind out!"  
et off with a spring, and in a moment was flying  
n the air, almost out of the door of the shed, the  
half of which was open, showing outside the driz-  
in, the filthy yard, the cattle standing disconsolate  
the black cart-shed, and at the back of all the  
een wall of the wood. She stood below in her  
tam-o'-shanter and watched. He looked down  
and she saw his blue eyes sparkling.  
s a treat of a swing," he said.  
s."

was swinging through the air, every bit of him  
g, like a bird that swoops for joy of movement.  
looked down at her. Her crimson cap hung over  
k curls, her beautiful warm face, so still in a kind  
ding, was lifted towards him. It was dark and  
cold in the shed. Suddenly a swallow came down  
ne high roof and darted out of the door.

"I didn't know a bird was watching," he called.  
wung negligently. She could feel him falling and  
through the air, as if he were lying on some force.  
w I'll die," he said, in a detached, dreamy voice, as  
he were the dying motion of the swing. She  
l him, fascinated. Suddenly he put on the brake  
mped out.

"I had a long turn," he said. "But it's a treat of  
— it's a real treat of a swing!"

am was amused that he took a swing so seriously  
t so warmly over it.

; you go on," she said.

"Why, don't you want one?" he asked, astonished.  
ell, not much. I'll have just a little."

sat down, whilst he kept the bags in place for her.  
s so ripping!" he said, setting her in motion.  
your heels up, or they'll bang the manger-wall." I  
elt the accuracy with which he caught her, exactly

at the right moment, and the exactly proportionate strength of his thrust, and she was afraid. Down to bowels went the hot wave of fear. She was in his hands. Again, firm and inevitable came the thrust at the right moment. She gripped the rope, almost swooning.

"Ha!" she laughed in fear. "No higher!"

"But you're not a *bit* high," he remonstrated.

"But no higher."

He heard the fear in her voice, and desisted. Her hands melted in hot pain when the moment came for him to thrust her forward again. But he left her alone, began to breathe.

"Won't you really go any farther?" he asked.  
"Should I keep you there?"

"No; let me go by myself," she answered.

He moved aside and watched her.

"Why, you're scarcely moving," he said.

She laughed slightly with shame, and in a moment lay down.

"They say if you can swing you won't be sea-sick," said, as he mounted again. "I don't believe I should be sea-sick."

Away he went. There was something fascinating about her in him. For the moment he was nothing but a piece of swinging stuff; not a particle of him that did swing. She could never lose herself so, nor could the brothers. It roused a warmth in her. It were almost as if he were a flame that had lit a warmth in her whilst swung in the middle air.

And gradually the intimacy with the family concentrated for Paul on three persons — the mother, Edith and Miriam. To the mother he went for that sympathy and that appeal which seemed to draw him out. Edith was his very close friend. And to Miriam he more or less condescended, because she seemed so humble.

But the girl gradually sought him out. If he brought up his sketch-book, it was she who pondered long over the last picture. Then she would look up at him

suddenly, her dark eyes alight like water that shakes with a stream of gold in the dark, she would ask:

"Why do I like this so?"

Always something in his breast shrank from these close, intimate, dazzled looks of hers.

"Why *do* you?" he asked.

"I don't know. It seems so true."

"It's because—it's because there is scarcely any shadow in it; it's more shimmery, as if I'd painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves and everywhere, and not the stiffness of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shimmeriness is the real living. The shape is a dead crust. The shimmer is inside really." *he he*

And she, with her little finger in her mouth, would ponder these sayings. They gave her a feeling of life again, and vivified things which had meant nothing to her. She managed to find some meaning in his struggling, abstract speeches. And they were the medium through which she came distinctly at her beloved objects.

Another day she sat at sunset whilst he was painting some pine-trees which caught the red glare from the west. He had been quiet.

"There you are!" he said suddenly. "I wanted that. Now, look at them and tell me, are they pine-trunks or are they red coals, standing-up pieces of fire in that darkness? There's God's burning bush for you, that burned not away."

Miriam looked, and was frightened. But the pine-trunks were wonderful to her, and distinct. He packed his box and rose. Suddenly he looked at her.

"Why are you always sad?" he asked her.

"Sad!" she exclaimed, looking up at him with startled, wonderful brown eyes.

"Yes," he replied. "You are always, always sad."

"I am not—oh, not a bit!" she cried.

"But even your joy is like a flame coming off of sadness," he persisted. "You're never jolly or even just all right."

"No," she pondered. "I wonder — why."

"Because you're not; because you're different insi  
like a pine-tree, and then you flare up; but you're not j  
like an ordinary tree, with fidgety leaves and jolly —"

He got tangled up in his own speech; but she brood  
on it, and he had a strange, roused sensation, as if  
feelings were new. She got so near him. It was a stran  
stimulant.

Then sometimes he hated her. Her youngest broth  
was only five. He was a frail lad, with immense bro  
eyes in his quaint, fragile face — one of Reynold  
"Choir of Angels," with a touch of elf. Often Miria  
kneeled to the child and drew him to her.

"Eh, my Hubert!" she sang, in a voice heavy a  
surcharged with love. "Eh, my Hubert!"

And, folding him in her arms, she swayed slightly fro  
side to side with love, her face half lifted, her eyes ha  
closed, her voice drenched with love.

"Don't!" said the child, uneasy — "don't, Miriam!"

"Yes; you love me, don't you?" she murmured de  
in her throat, almost as if she were in a trance, and swa  
ing also as if she were swooned in an ecstasy of love.

"Don't!" repeated the child, a frown on his clear bro

"You love me, don't you?" she murmured.

"What do you make such a fuss for?" cried Paul, a  
in suffering because of her extreme emotion. "Why can't  
you be ordinary with him?"

She let the child go, and rose, and said nothing. He  
intensity, which would leave no emotion on a normal plane,  
irritated the youth into a frenzy. And this tearful, naked  
contact of her on small occasions shocked him. He was  
used to his mother's reserve. And on such occasions he  
was thankful in his heart and soul that he had his mother  
so sane and wholesome.

All the life of Miriam's body was in her eyes, which  
were usually dark as a dark church, but could flame with  
*light like a conflagration.* Her face scarcely ever altered  
from its look of brooding. She might have been one of the

women who went with Mary when Jesus was dead. Her body was not flexible and living. She walked with a swing, rather heavily, her head bowed forward, pondering. She was not clumsy, and yet none of her movements seemed quite *the* movement. Often, when wiping the dishes, she would stand in bewilderment and chagrin because she had pulled in two halves a cup or a tumbler. It was as if, in her fear and self-mistrust, she put too much strength into the effort. There was no looseness or abandon about her. Everything was gripped stiff with intensity, and her effort, overcharged, closed in on itself.

She rarely varied from her swinging, forward, intense walk. Occasionally she ran with Paul down the fields. Then her eyes blazed naked in a kind of ecstasy that frightened him. But she was physically afraid. If she were getting over a stile, she gripped his hands in a little hard anguish, and began to lose her presence of mind. And he could not persuade her to jump from even a small height. Her eyes dilated, became exposed and palpitating.

"No!" she cried, half laughing in terror — "no!"

"You shall!" he cried once, and, jerking her forward, he brought her falling from the fence. But her wild "Ah!" of pain, as if she were losing consciousness, cut him. She landed on her feet safely, and afterwards had courage in this respect.

She was very much dissatisfied with her lot.

"Don't you like being at home?" Paul asked her, surprised.

"Who would?" she answered, low and intense. "What is it? I'm all day cleaning what the boys make just as bad in five minutes. I don't *want* to be at home."

"What do you want, then?"

"I want to do something. I want a chance like anybody else. Why should I, because I'm a girl, be kept at home and not allowed to be anything? What chance *ve* I?"

"Chance of what?"

"Of knowing anything — of learning, of doing anything. It's not fair, because I'm a woman."

She seemed very bitter. Paul wondered. In his own home Annie was almost glad to be a girl. She had not so much responsibility; things were lighter for her. She never wanted to be other than a girl. But Miriam almost fiercely wished she were a man. And yet she hated men at the same time.

"But it's as well to be a woman as a man," he said, frowning.

"Ha! Is it? Men have everything."

"I should think women ought to be as glad to be women as men are to be men," he answered.

"No!" she shook her head — "no! Everything the men have."

"But what do you want?" he asked.

"I want to learn. Why *should* it be that I know nothing?"

"What! such as mathematics and French?"

"Why *shouldn't* I know mathematics? Yes!" she cried, her eye expanding in a kind of defiance.

"Well, you can learn as much as I know," he said. "I'll teach you, if you like."

Her eyes dilated. She mistrusted him as teacher.

"Would you?" he asked.

Her head had dropped, and she was sucking her finger broodingly.

"Yes," she said hesitatingly.

He used to tell his mother all these things.

"I'm going to teach Miriam algebra," he said.

"Well," replied Mrs. Morel, "I hope she'll get fat on it."

When he went up to the farm on the Monday evening, it was drawing twilight. Miriam was just sweeping up the kitchen, and was kneeling at the hearth when he entered. Everyone was out but her. She looked round at him, flushed, her dark eyes shining, her fine hair falling about her face.

"Hello!" she said, soft and musical. "I knew it was you."

"How?"

"I knew your step. Nobody treads so quick and firm." He sat down, sighing.

"Ready to do some algebra?" he asked, drawing a little book from his pocket.

"But—"

He could feel her backing away.

"You said you wanted," he insisted.

"To-night, though?" she faltered.

"But I came on purpose. And if you want to learn it, you must begin."

She took up her ashes in the dustpan and looked at him, half tremulously, laughing.

"Yes, but to-night! You see, I have n't thought of it."

"Well, my goodness! Take the ashes and come."

He went and sat on the stone bench in the back-yard, where the big milk-cans were standing, tipped up, to air. The men were in the cowsheds. He could hear the little sing-song of the milk spurting into the pails. Presently she came, bringing some big greenish apples.

"You know you like them," she said.

He took a bite.

"Sit down," he said, with his mouth full.

She was short-sighted, and peered over his shoulder. It irritated him. He gave her the book quickly.

"Here," he said. "It's only letters for figures. You put down 'a' instead of '2' or '6.'"

They worked, he talking, she with her head down on the book. He was quick and hasty. She never answered. Occasionally, when he demanded of her, "Do you see?" she looked up at him, her eyes wide with the half-laugh that comes of fear. "Don't you?" he cried.

He had been too fast. But she said nothing. He questioned her more, then got hot. It made his blood rous see her there, as it were, at his mercy, her mouth ope

her eyes dilated with laughter that was afraid, apologetic, ashamed. Then Edgar came along with two buckets of milk.

"Hello!" he said. "What are you doing?"

"Algebra," replied Paul.

"Algebra!" repeated Edgar curiously. Then he passed on with a laugh. Paul took a bite at his forgotten apple, looked at the miserable cabbages in the garden, pecked into lace by the fowls, and he wanted to pull them up. Then he glanced at Miriam. She was poring over the book, seemed absorbed in it, yet trembling lest she could not get at it. It made him cross. She was ruddy and beautiful. Yet her soul seemed to be intensely supplicating. The algebra-book she closed, shrinking, knowing he was angered; and at the same instant he grew gentle, seeing her hurt because she did not understand.

But things came slowly to her. And when she held herself in a grip, seemed so utterly humble before the lesson, it made his blood rouse. He stormed at her, got ashamed, continued the lesson, and grew furious again, abusing her. She listened in silence. Occasionally, very rarely, she defended herself. Her liquid dark eyes blazed at him.

"You don't give me time to learn it," she said.

"All right," he answered, throwing the book on the table and lighting a cigarette. Then, after awhile, he went back to her repentant. So the lessons went. He was always either in a rage or very gentle.

"What do you tremble your *soul* before it for?" he cried. "You don't learn algebra with your blessed soul. Can't you look at it with your clear simple wits?"

Often, when he went again into the kitchen, Mrs. Leivers would look at him reproachfully, saying:

"Paul, don't be so hard on Miriam. She may not be quick, but I'm sure she tries."

"I can't help it," he said rather pitifully. "I go off like it."

"You don't mind me, Miriam, do you?" he asked of the girl later.

she reassured him in her beautiful deep tones —  
on't mind."

t mind me; it's my fault."

n spite of himself, his blood began to boil with  
was strange that no one else made him in such  
e flared against her. Once he threw the pencil in  
. There was a silence. She turned her face  
side.

I n't — " he began, but got no farther, feeling  
all his bones. She never reproached him or was  
ith him. He was often cruelly ashamed. But  
n his anger burst like a bubble surcharged; and  
n he saw her eager, silent, as it were, blind face,  
e wanted to throw the pencil in it; and still,  
saw her hand trembling and her mouth parted  
ering, his heart was scalded with pain for her.  
ause of the intensity to which she roused him, he  
er.

he often avoided her and went with Edgar.  
and her brother were naturally antagonistic.  
was a rationalist, who was curious, and had a  
cientific interest in life. It was a great bitterness  
m to see herself deserted by Paul for Edgar, who  
o much lower. But the youth was very happy  
elder brother. The two men spent afternoons  
on the land or in the loft doing carpentry, when  
I. And they talked together, or Paul taught  
he songs he himself had learned from Annie at the  
And often all the men, Mr. Leivers as well, had  
bates on the nationalizing of the land and similar  
s. Paul had already heard his mother's views, and  
were as yet his own, he argued for her. Miriam  
and took part, but was all the time waiting  
should be over and a personal communication  
egin.

er all," she said within herself, " if the land were  
ized, Edgar and Paul and I would be just the  
So she waited for the youth to come back to her

He was studying for his painting. He loved to be home, alone with his mother, at night, working and resting. She sewed or read. Then, looking up from his work, he would rest his eyes for a moment on her face, that was bright with living warmth, and he returned gladly to work.

"I can do my best things when you sit there in rocking-chair, mother," he said.

"I'm sure!" she exclaimed, sniffing with mock suspicion. But she felt it was so, and her heart quivered with brightness. For many hours she sat still, slightly conscious of him labouring away, whilst she worked on her book. And he, with all his soul's intensity directed his pencil, could feel her warmth inside him like strength. They were both very happy so, and both unconsciously it. These times, that meant so much, and which were living, they almost ignored.

He was conscious only when stimulated. A sketch he had sketched, he always wanted to take it to Miriam. This was stimulated into knowledge of the work he had produced unconsciously. In contact with Miriam he gained insight; his vision went deeper. From his mother he learned the life-warmth, the strength to produce; Miriam gave him this warmth into intensity like a white light.

When he returned to the factory the conditions of life were better. He had Wednesday afternoon off to go to the Art School — Miss Jordan's provision — returning in the evening. Then the factory closed at six instead of eight on Thursday and Friday evenings.

One evening in the summer Miriam and he went to the fields by Herod's Farm on their way from the village home. So it was only three miles to Willey Farm. There was a yellow glow over the mowing-grass, and the sun's heads burned crimson. Gradually, as they walked across the high land, the gold in the west sank down to red to crimson, and then the chill blue crept up against the glow.

*They came out upon the high road to Alfreton,*

white between the darkening fields. There Paul hesitated. It was two miles home for him, one mile forward Miriam. They both looked up the road that ran in now right under the glow of the north-west sky. On the rest of the hill, Selby, with its stark houses and the rickbed headstocks of the pit, stood in black silhouette against the sky.

He looked at his watch.

"Nine o'clock!" he said.

The pair stood, loth to part, hugging their books.

"The wood is so lovely now," she said. "I wanted you to see it."

He followed her slowly across the road to the white

"They grumble so if I'm late," he said.

"But you're not doing anything wrong," she answered patiently.

He followed her across the nibbled pasture in the dusk. There was a coolness in the wood, a scent of leaves, of yew, and a twilight. The two walked in silence. It came wonderfully there, among the throng of dark trunks. He looked round, expectant.

He wanted to show her a certain wild-rose bush she discovered. She knew it was wonderful. And yet, she had seen it, she felt it had not come into her soul. She could make it her own, immortal. She was disfied.

He was already on the paths. In the old oak-wood he was rising, and he hesitated, wondering whether the whiteness were a strand of fog or only campion-flowers pallid in a cloud.

At the time they came to the pine-trees Miriam was very eager and very tense. Her bush might be there. She might not be able to find it; and she wanted it much. Almost passionately she wanted to be with him when he stood before the flowers. They were going to have a communion together — something that thrilled something holy. He was walking beside her in silence.

They were very near to each other. She trembled, and he listened, vaguely anxious.

Coming to the edge of the wood, they saw the sky in front, like mother-of-pearl, and the earth growing dark. Somewhere on the outermost branches of the pine-wood the honeysuckle was streaming scent.

"Where?" he asked.

"Down the middle path," she murmured, quivering.

When they turned the corner of the path she stood still. In the wide walk between the pines, gazing rather frightened, she could distinguish nothing for some moments; the greying light robbed things of their colour. Then she saw her bush.

"Ah!" she cried, hastening forward.

It was very still. The tree was tall and straggling. It had thrown its briars over a hawthorn-bush, and its long streamers trailed thick, right down to the grass, splashing the darkness everywhere with great spilt stars, pure white. In bosses of ivory and in large splashed stars the roses gleamed on the darkness of foliage and stems and grass. Paul and Miriam stood close together, silent, and watched. Point after point the steady roses shone out to them, seeming to kindle something in their souls. The dusk came like smoke around, and still did not put out the roses.

Paul looked into Miriam's eyes. She was pale and expectant with wonder, her lips were parted, and her dark eyes lay open to him. His look seemed to travel down into her. Her soul quivered. It was the communion she wanted. He turned aside, as if pained. He turned to the bush.

"They seem as if they walk like butterflies, and shake themselves," he said.

She looked at her roses. They were white, some curved and holy, others expanded in an ecstasy. There was dark as a shadow. She lifted her hand impulsively to the flowers; she went forward and touched them.

"Let us go," he said.

There was a cool scent of ivory roses — a white, virgin girl. Something made him feel anxious and imprisoned. The two walked in silence.

"Till Sunday," he said quietly, and left her; and she walked home slowly, feeling her soul satisfied with the stillness of the night. He stumbled down the path. And soon as he was out of the wood, in the free openadow, where he could breathe, he started to run as fast as he could. It was like a delicious delirium in his ins.

Always when he went with Miriam, and it grew rather late, he knew his mother was fretting and getting angry about him — why, he could not understand. As he went to the house, flinging down his cap, his mother looked at the clock. She had been sitting thinking, because the chill to her eyes prevented her reading. She could feel the pull being drawn away by this girl. And she did not care for Miriam. "She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left," he said to herself; "and he is just such a gabby as to let himself be absorbed. She will never let him become a man; she never will." So, while he was away with Miriam, Mrs. Morel grew more and more worked up.

She glanced at the clock and said, coldly and rather tired:

"You have been far enough to-night."

His soul, warm and exposed from contact with the girl, was rank.

"You must have been right home with her," his mother continued.

He would not answer. Mrs. Morel, looking at him quickly, saw his hair was damp on his forehead with haste, and him frowning in his heavy fashion, resentfully.

"She must be wonderfully fascinating, that you can't get away from her, but must go trailing eight miles at the time of night."

*she was hurt between the past glamour with Miriam and*

the knowledge that his mother fretted. He had meant to say anything, to refuse to answer. But he could harden his heart to ignore his mother.

"I do like to talk to her," he answered irritably.

"Is there nobody else to talk to?"

"You would n't say anything if I went with Edga

"You know I should. You know, whoever you w  
with, I should say it was too far for you to go trai  
late at night, when you 've been to Nottingham. Beside  
—her voice suddenly flashed into anger and contempt  
"it is disgusting — bits of lads and girls courting."

"It is *not* courting," he cried.

"I don't know what else you call it."

"It's not! Do you think we *spoon* and do? We or  
talk."

"Till goodness knows what time and distance," was t  
sarcastic rejoinder.

Paul snapped at the laces of his boots angrily.

"What are you so mad about?" he asked. "Beca  
you don't like her?"

"I don't say I don't like her. But I don't hold wit  
children keeping company, and never did."

"But you don't mind our Annie going out with Jir  
Inger."

"They 've more sense than you two."

"Why?"

"Our Annie 's not one of the deep sort."

He failed to see the meaning of this remark. But hi  
mother looked tired. She was never so strong afte  
William's death; and her eyes hurt her.

"Well," he said, "it 's so pretty in the country. Mr  
Sleath asked about you. He said he 'd missed you. An  
you a bit better?"

"I ought to have been in bed a long time ago," sh  
replied.

"Why, mother, you know you would n't have gone be  
fore quarter-past ten."

"Oh yes, I should!"

"Oh, little woman, you 'd say anything now you 're disagreeable with me, would n't you?"

He kissed her forehead that he knew so well: the deep wrinkles between the brows, the rising of the fine hair, grey-ing now, and the proud setting of the temples. His hand lingered on her shoulder after his kiss. Then he went owly to bed. He had forgotten Miriam; he only saw now his mother's hair was lifted back from her warm, road brow. And somehow, she was hurt.

Then the next time he saw Miriam he said to her:

"Don't let me be late to-night — not later than ten clock. My mother gets so upset."

Miriam dropped her head, brooding.

"Why does she get upset?" she asked.

"Because she says I ought n't to be out late when have to get up early."

"Very well!" said Miriam, rather quietly, with just a touch of a sneer.

He resented that. And he was usually late again.

That there was any love growing between him and Miriam neither of them would have acknowledged. He thought he was too sane for such sentimentality, and she thought herself too lofty. They both were late in coming to maturity, and psychical ripeness was much behind even the physical. Miriam was exceedingly sensitive, as her brother had always been. The slightest grossness made her recoil almost in anguish. Her brothers were brutal, but never coarse in speech. The men did all the discussing of farm matters outside. But, perhaps because of the continual business of birth and of begetting which goes upon every farm, Miriam was the more hypersensitive to the matter, and her blood was chastened almost to dis-taste of the faintest suggestion of such intercourse. Paul took his pitch from her, and their intimacy went on in utterly blanched and chaste fashion. It could never be mentioned that the mare was in foal.

When he was nineteen, he was earning only twenty dollars a week, but he was happy. His painting wen-

well, and life went well enough. On the Good Friday he organized a walk to the Hemlock Stone. Then the three lads of his own age, then Annie and Arthur, and Geoffrey. Arthur, apprenticed as an electrician at Nottingham, was home for the holiday. Morel, as usual, was up early, whistling and sawing in the yard. At half-past seven the family heard him buy threepennyworth of cross buns; he talked with gusto to the little girl who brought them, calling her "my darling." He sent away several boys who came with more buns, telling them they had been "kested" by a little lass. The Morels got up, and the family straggled down. It was an immense luxury to everybody, this lying in bed just beyond the ordinary time on a weekday. And Paul Arthur read before breakfast, and had the meal unbuttoned, sitting in their shirt-sleeves. This was another luxury. The room was warm. Everything felt care and anxiety. There was a sense of plenty in the house.

While the boys were reading, Mrs. Morel went into the garden. They were now in another house, an old one near the Scargill Street home, which had been let after William had died. Directly came an excited cry from the garden:

"Paul, Paul! come and look!"

It was his mother's voice. He threw down his book and went out. There was a long garden that ran to the right. It was a grey, cold day, with a sharp wind blowing from Derbyshire. Two fields away Bestwood began, a jumble of roofs and red house-ends, out of which rose the church tower and the spire of the Congregational chapel. And beyond went woods and hills, right across to the pale grey heights of the Pennine Chain.

Paul looked down the garden for his mother. He appeared among the young currant bushes.

"Come here!" she cried.

"What for?" he answered.

"Come and see."

She had been looking at the buds on the currant-trees. Paul went up.

"To think," she said, "that here I might never have seen them!"

Her son went to her side. Under the fence, in a little bed, was a ravel of poor grassy leaves, such as come from very immature bulbs, and three scyllas in bloom. Mrs. Morel pointed to the deep blue flowers.

"Now, just see those!" she exclaimed. "I was looking at the currant-bushes, when, thinks I to myself, There's something very blue; is it a bit of sugar-bag? And there, behold you! Sugar-bag! Three glories of the snow, and *such* beauties! But where on earth did they come from?"

"I don't know," said Paul.

"Well, that's a marvel, now! *I thought* I knew every seed and blade in this garden. But *haven't* they done well? You see, that gooseberry-bush just shelters them. Not nipped, not touched!"

He crouched down and turned up the bells of the little blue flowers.

"They're a glorious colour!" he said.

"Aren't they!" she cried. "I guess they come from Switzerland, where they say they have such lovely things. Fancy them against the snow! But where have they come from? They can't have *blown* here, can they?"

Then he remembered having set here a lot of little trashy bulbs to mature.

"And you never told me," she said.

"No; I thought I'd leave it till they might flower."

"And now, you see! I might have missed them. And I've never had a glory of the snow in my garden in my life."

She was full of excitement and elation. The garden was an endless joy to her. Paul was thankful for her sake to last to be in a house with a long garden that went down to a field. Every morning after breakfast she went out

and was happy pottering about in it. And it was t  
she knew every weed and blade.

Everybody turned up for the walk. Food was pac  
and they set off, a merry, delighted party. They h  
over the wall of the mill-race, dropped paper in the w  
on one side the tunnel and watched it shoot out on  
other. They stood on the footbridge over Boath  
Station and looked at the metals gleaming coldly.

"You should see the Flying Scotchman come thro  
at half-past six!" said Leonard, whose father wa  
signal-man. "Lad, but she does n't half buzz!" and  
little party looked up the lines one way, to London,  
the other way, to Scotland, and they felt the touch  
these two magical places.

In Ilkeston the colliers were waiting in gangs for  
public-houses to open. It was a town of idleness  
lounging. At Stanton Gate the iron foundry bla  
Over everything there were great discussions. At Tro  
they crossed again from Derbyshire into Nottinghamsh  
They came to the Hemlock Stone at dinner-time. Its  
was crowded with folk from Nottingham and Ilkeston.

They had expected a venerable and dignified monum  
They found a little, gnarled, twisted stump of rock, so  
thing like a decayed mushroom, standing out pathetic  
on the side of a field. Leonard and Dick immediately  
ceeded to carve their initials, "L. W." and "R. P.,"  
the old red sandstone; but Paul desisted, because he  
read in the newspaper satirical remarks about ini  
carvers, who could find no other road to immortal  
Then all the lads climbed to the top of the rock to l  
round.

Everywhere in the field below, factory girls and  
were eating lunch or sporting about. Beyond was  
garden of an old manor. It had yew-hedges and t  
clumps and borders of yellow crocuses round the la

"See," said Paul to Miriam, "what a quiet garde  
She saw the dark yews and the golden crocuses, then  
looked at him gratefully. He had not seemed to belon

r among all these others; he was different then — not r Paul, who understood the slightest quiver of her . nermost soul, but something else, speaking another guage than hers. How it hurt her, and deadened her ry perceptions. Only when he came right back to her, wing his other, his lesser self, as she thought, would she el alive again. And now he asked her to look at this rden, wanting the contact with her again. Impatient the set in the field, she turned to the quiet lawn, sur unded by sheaves of shut-up crocuses. A feeling of illness, almost of ecstasy, came over her. It felt almost if she were alone with him in this garden.

Then he left her again and joined the others. Soon ey started home. Miriam loitered behind, alone. She d not fit in with the others; she could very rarely get to human relations with anyone: so her friend, her com nion, her lover, was Nature. She saw the sun declining nly. In the dusky, cold hedgerows were some red tves. She lingered to gather them, tenderly, passionately. The love in her finger-tips caressed the leaves; e passion in her heart came to a glow upon the leaves. Suddenly she realized she was alone in a strange road, d she hurried forward. Turning a corner in the lane, e came upon Paul, who stood bent over something, his nd fixed on it, working away steadily, patiently, a little pelessly. She hesitated in her approach, to watch. He remained concentrated in the middle of the road. yond, one rift of rich gold in that colourless grey even seemed to make him stand out in dark relief. She w him, slender and firm, as if the setting sun had given n to her. A deep pain took hold of her, and she knew e must love him. And she had discovered him, discov ed in him a rare potentiality, discovered his loneliness. livering as at some "annunciation," she went slowly rward.

At last he looked up.

"Why," he exclaimed gratefully, "have you waited for el?"

She saw a deep shadow in his eyes.

"What is it?" she asked.

"The spring broken here"; and he showed her where his umbrella was injured.

Instantly, with some shame, she knew he had not done the damage himself, but that Geoffrey was responsible.

"It is only an old umbrella, is n't it?" she asked.

She wondered why he, who did not usually trouble over trifles, made such a mountain of this molehill.

"But it was William's, an' my mother can't help but know," he said quietly, still patiently working at the umbrella.

The words went through Miriam like a blade. This, then, was the confirmation of her vision of him! She looked at him. But there was about him a certain reserve, and she dared not comfort him, not even speak softly to him.

"Come on," he said. "I can't do it"; and they went in silence along the road.

That same evening they were walking along under the trees by Nether Green. He was talking to her fretfully, seemed to be struggling to convince himself.

"You know," he said, with an effort, "if one person loves, the other does."

"Ah!" she answered. "Like mother said to me when I was little, 'Love begets love.'"

"Yes, something like that, I think it *must* be."

"I hope so, because, if it were not, love might be a very terrible thing," she said.

"Yes, but it *is* — at least with most people," he answered.

And Miriam, thinking he had assured himself, felt strong in herself. She always regarded that sudden coming upon him in the lane as a revelation. And this conversation remained graven in her mind as one of the letters of the law.

Now she stood with him and for him. When, about this time, he outraged the family feeling at Willey Farm

overbearing insult, she stuck to him, and he was right. And at this time she dreamed dreams vivid, unforgettable. These dreams came again developed to a more subtle psychological stage. On Easter Monday the same party took an excursion to Wingfield Manor. It was great excitement to catch a train at Sethley Bridge, amid all the Bank Holiday crowd. They left the train station. Paul was interested in the street and in the miners with their dogs. Here was a new race of miners. They did not live till they came to the church. They were rather timid of entering, with their bags of food, afraid of being turned out. Leonard, a comic, thin fellow first; Paul, who would have died rather than back, went last. The place was decorated for Easter. In the font hundreds of white narcissi seemed to be owing. The air was dim and coloured from the flowers, and thrilled with a subtle scent of lilies and narcissi. That atmosphere Miriam's soul came into a glow. She was afraid of the things he must n't do; and he was afraid of the feel of the place. Miriam turned to him. They were together. He would not go to the Communion-rail. She loved him for that. Her heart expanded into prayer beside him. He felt the fascination of shadowy religious places. All his mysticism quivered into life. She was drawn to him, a prayer along with her.

They very rarely talked to the other lads. They at first came awkward in conversation with her. So she was silent.

It was past midday when they climbed the steep path to the manor. All things shone softly in the sun, which was wonderfully warm and enlivening. Celandines and primroses were out. Everybody was tip-top full with happiness. The glitter of the ivy, the soft, atmospheric grey of the castle walls, the gentleness of everything near the manor was perfect.

The manor is of hard, pale grey stone, and the outer

walls are blank and calm. The young folk were in raptures. They went in trepidation, almost afraid that the delight of exploring this ruin might be denied them. In the first courtyard, within the high broken walls, were farm-carts, with their shafts lying idle on the ground, the tyres of the wheels brilliant with gold-red rust. It was very still.

All eagerly paid their sixpences, and went timidly through the fine clean arch of the inner courtyard. They were shy. Here on the pavement, where the hall had been, an old thorn-tree was budding. All kinds of strange openings and broken rooms were in the shadow around them.

After lunch they set off once more to explore the ruin. This time the girls went with the boys, who could act as guides and expositors. There was one tall tower in a corner, rather tottering, where they say Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned.

"Think of the Queen going up here!" said Miriam in a low voice, as she climbed the hollow stairs.

"If she could get up," said Paul, "for she had rheumatism like anything. I reckon they treated her rottenly."

"You don't think she deserved it?" asked Miriam.

"No, I don't. She was only lively."

They continued to mount the winding staircase. The high wind, blowing through the loopholes, went rushing up the shaft, and filled the girl's skirts like a balloon, so that she was ashamed, until he took the hem of her dress and held it down for her. He did it perfectly simply as he would have picked up her glove. She remembered this always.

Round the broken top of the tower the ivy bushed over old and handsome. Also, there were a few chill gillies in pale cold bud. Miriam wanted to lean over for some ivy, but he would not let her. Instead, she had to walk behind him, and take from him each spray as he gathered it and held it to her, each one separately, in the pure

iner of chivalry. The tower seemed to rock in the d. They looked over miles and miles of wooded coun- and country with gleams of pasture.

The crypt underneath the manor was beautiful, and perfect preservation. Paul made a drawing: Miriam ed with him. She was thinking of Mary Queen of ts looking with her strained, hopeless eyes, that could understand misery, over the hills whence no help came, itting in this crypt, being told of a God as cold as place she sat in.

hey set off again gaily, looking round on their bed manor that stood so clean and big on its

Supposing you could have *that* farm," said Paul to iam.

Yes!"

Would n't it be lovely to come and see you!"

hey were now in the bare country of stone walls, h he loved, and which, though only ten miles from e, seemed so foreign to Miriam. The party was ggling. As they were crossing a large meadow that ed away from the sun, along a path embedded with merable tiny glittering points, Paul, walking along- laced his fingers in the strings of the bag Miriam carrying, and instantly she felt Annie behind, watch- and jealous. But the meadow was bathed in a glory inshine, and the path was jewelled, and it was seldom he gave her any sign. She held her fingers very still ng the strings of the bag, his fingers touching; and place was golden as a vision.

t last they came into the straggling grey village of h, that lies high. Beyond the village was the famous h Stand that Paul could see from the garden at e. The party pushed on. Great expanse of country ad around and below. The lads were eager to get ne top of the hill. It was capped by a round knoll, of which was by now cut away, and on the top of h stood an ancient monument, sturdy and squat, for

signalling in old days far down into the level land of Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

It was blowing so hard, high up there in the exposed place, that the only way to be safe was to stand near by the wind to the wall of the tower. At their feet was the precipice where the limestone was quarried at. Below was a jumble of hills and tiny villages — Matlock, Ambergate, Stoney Middleton. The lads were eager to spy out the church of Bestwood, far away among the rather crowded country on the left. They were disgusted at it seemed to stand on a plain. They saw the hills of Derbyshire fall into the monotony of the Midlands, and then swept away South.

Miriam was somewhat scared by the wind, but the boys enjoyed it. They went on, miles and miles, to Whatsthorpe well. All the food was eaten, everybody was hungry, and there was very little money to get home with. But they managed to procure a loaf and a currant-loaf, which they hacked into pieces with shut-knives, and ate sitting on the wall near the bridge, watching the bright Derbyshire Dervishes rushing by, and the brakes from Matlock pulling up outside the inn.

Paul was now pale with weariness. He had been responsible for the party all day, and now he was dead-tired. Miriam understood, and kept close to him, and held him in her hands.

They had an hour to wait at Ambergate Station. Trains came, crowded with excursionists returning from Manchester, Birmingham, and London.

"We might be going there — folk easily might think we're going that far," said Paul.

They got back rather late. Miriam, walking home with Geoffrey, watched the moon rise big and red and mischievous. She felt something was fulfilled in her.

She had an elder sister, Agatha, who was a school-teacher. Between the two girls was a feud. Miriam considered Agatha worldly. And she wanted herself to be a school-teacher.

One Saturday afternoon Agatha and Miriam were upstairs dressing. Their bedroom was over the stable. It is a low room, not very large, and bare. Miriam had hung on the wall a reproduction of Veronese's "St. Catherine." She loved the woman who sat in the window, gazing. Her own windows were too small to sit in. In the front one was draped over with honeysuckle and Virginia creeper, and looked upon the tree-tops of the oak-wood across the yard, while the little back window, bigger than a handkerchief, was a loophole to the east, the dawn beating up against the beloved round ls.

The two sisters did not talk much to each other. Agatha, who was fair and small and determined, had revolted against the home atmosphere, against the doctrine "the other cheek." She was out in the world now, in fair way to be independent. And she insisted on worldly dues, on appearance, on manners, on position, which Miriam would fain have ignored.

Both girls liked to be upstairs, out of the way, when Paul came. They preferred to come running down, open the stairfoot door, and see him watching, expectant of them. Miriam stood painfully pulling over her head a sash he had given her. It caught in the fine mesh of her hair. But at last she had it on, and the red-brown wooden beads looked well against her cool brown neck. She was a well-developed girl, and very handsome. But the little looking-glass nailed against the whitewashed wall she could only see a fragment of herself at a time. Agatha had bought a little mirror of her own, which she propped up to suit herself. Miriam was near the window. Suddenly she heard the well-known click of the chain, and she saw Paul fling open the gate, push his bicycle into the yard. She saw him look at the house, and she shrank away. He walked in a nonchalant fashion, and his bicycle went with him as if it were a live thing. "Paul's come!" she exclaimed.

"Are n't you glad?" said Agatha cuttingly.

Miriam stood still in amazement and bewilderment.

"Well, are n't you?" she asked.

"Yes, but I'm not going to let him see it, and thin I wanted him."

Miriam was startled. She heard him putting his bicycl in the stable underneath, and talking to Jimmy, who ha been a pit-horse, and who was seedy.

"Well, Jimmy my lad, how are ter? Nobbut sick at sadly, like? Why, then, it 's a shame, my owd lad."

She heard the rope run through the hole as the hors lifted its head from the lad's caress. How she loved to listen when he thought only the horse could hear. But there was a serpent in her Eden. She searched earnestly in herself to see if she wanted Paul Morel. She felt there would be some disgrace in it. Full of twisted feeling, she was afraid she did want him. She stood self-convicted. Then came an agony of new shame. She shrank within herself in a coil of torture. Did she want Paul Morel and did he know she wanted him? What a subtle infamy upon her! She felt as if her whole soul coiled into knots of shame.

Agatha was dressed first, and ran downstairs. Miriam heard her greet the lad gaily, knew exactly how brilliant her grey eyes became with that tone. She herself would have felt it bold to have greeted him in such wise. Yet there she stood under the self-accusation of wanting him tied to that stake of torture. In bitter perplexity she kneeled down and prayed:

"O Lord, let me not love Paul Morel. Keep me from loving him, if I ought not to love him."

Something anomalous in the prayer arrested her. She lifted her head and pondered. How could it be wrong to love him? Love was God's gift. And yet it caused her shame. That was because of him, Paul Morel. But, then it was not his affair, it was her own, between herself and God. She was to be a sacrifice. But it was God's sacrifice not Paul Morel's or her own. After a few minutes she hid her face in the pillow again, and said:

But, Lord, if it is Thy will that I should love him, make me love him — as Christ would, who died for the love of men. Make me love him splendidly, because he is my son."

She remained kneeling for some time, quite still, and then moved, her black hair against the red squares and lavender-sprigged squares of the patchwork-quilt. Her love was almost essential to her. Then she fell into rapture of self-sacrifice, identifying herself with a girl who was sacrificed, which gives to so many human beings their deepest bliss.

When she went downstairs Paul was lying back in an armchair, holding forth with much vehemence to Agatha, who was scorning a little painting he had brought to show her. Miriam glanced at the two, and avoided their levity. She went into the parlour to be alone.

It was teatime before she was able to speak to Paul, when her manner was so distant he thought he had offended her.

Miriam discontinued her practice of going each Thursday evening to the library in Bestwood. After calling on Paul regularly during the whole spring, a number of small incidents and tiny insults from his family awakened her to their attitude towards her, and she decided no more. So she announced to Paul one evening that she could not call at his house again for him on Thursday evenings.

"Why?" he asked, very short.  
"Nothing. Only I'd rather not."

"Very well."

"She faltered, "if you'd care to meet me, we could go together."

"Where?"

"Where — where you like."

"I don't meet you anywhere. I don't see why you should keep calling for me. But if you won't, I don't want to meet you."

"Thursday evenings which had been so precious

to her, and to him, were dropped. He worked instead. Mrs. Morel sniffed with satisfaction at this arrangement.

He would not have it that they were lovers. The intimacy between them had been kept so abstract, such a matter of the soul, all thought and weary struggle of consciousness, that he saw it only as a platonic friendship. He stoutly denied there was anything else between them. Miriam was silent, or else she very quietly agreed. He was a fool who did not know what was happening to himself. By tacit agreement they ignored the remarks and insinuations of their acquaintances.

"We aren't lovers, we are friends," he said to her. "We know it. Let them talk. What does it matter what they say?"

Sometimes, as they were walking together, she slipped her arm timidly into his. But he always resented it, though she knew it. It caused a violent conflict in him. With Miriam he was always on the high plane of abstraction, when his natural fire of love was transmitted into the fine stream of thought. She would have it. If he were jolly and, as she put it, flippant, she would wait till he came back to her, till the change had taken place in him again, and he was wrestling with his own sullen frowning, passionate in his desire for understanding. In this passion for understanding her soul lay close to him; she had him all to herself. But he must be made abstemious first.

Then, if she put her arm in his, it caused him almost torture. His consciousness seemed to split. The place where she was touching him ran hot with friction. There was one internecine battle, and he became cruel to her because of it.

One evening in midsummer Miriam called at the house warm from climbing. Paul was alone in the kitchen; his mother could be heard moving about upstairs.

"Come and look at the sweet-peas," he said to her. They went into the garden. The sky behind the trees was a pale blue and the church was orange-red; the flower-garden

ith a strange warm light that lifted every leaf ificance. Paul passed along a fine row of sweet-  
hering a blossom here and there, all cream and  
e. Miriam followed, breathing the fragrance.  
flowers appealed with such strength she felt she  
ke them part of herself. When she bent and  
a flower, it was as if she and the flower were  
ch other. Paul hated her for it. There seemed  
of exposure about the action, something too

he had got a fair bunch, they returned to the  
He listened for a moment to his mother's quiet  
t upstairs, then he said:

e here, and let me pin them in for you." He  
them two or three at a time in the bosom of  
, stepping back now and then to see the effect.  
ow," he said, taking the pin out of his mouth,  
n ought always to arrange her flowers before her

laughed. She thought flowers ought to be  
one's dress without any care. That Paul should  
is to fix her flowers for her was his whim.

is rather offended at her laughter.

e women do — those who look decent," he said.  
n laughed again, but mirthlessly, to hear him thus  
ip with women in a general way. From most men  
I have ignored it. But from him it hurt her.

d nearly finished arranging the flowers when he  
mother's footstep on the stairs. Hurriedly he  
the last pin and turned away.

t let mater know," he said.

i picked up her books and stood in the doorway  
with chagrin at the beautiful sunset. She would  
Paul no more, she said.

l-evening, Mrs. Morel," she said, in a deferential  
ie sounded as if she felt she had no right to be

it you, Miriam?" replied Mrs. Morel cool

But Paul insisted on everybody's accepting his friendship with the girl, and Mrs. Morel was too wise to have any open rupture.

It was not till he was twenty years old that the family could ever afford to go away for a holiday. Mrs. Morel had never been away for a holiday, except to see her sister, since she had been married. Now at last Paul had saved enough money, and they were all going. There was to be a party: some of Annie's friends, one friend of Paul's, a young man in the same office where William had previously been, and Miriam.

It was great excitement writing for rooms. Paul and his mother debated it endlessly between them. They wanted a furnished cottage for two weeks. She thought one week would be enough, but he insisted on two.

At last they got an answer from Mablethorpe, a cottage such as they wished for thirty shillings a week. There was immense jubilation. Paul was wild with joy for his mother's sake. She would have a real holiday now. He and she sat at evening picturing what it would be like. Annie came in, and Leonard, and Alice, and Kitty. There was wild rejoicing and anticipation. Paul told Miriam. She seemed to brood with joy over it. In the Morels' house rang with excitement.

They were to go on Saturday morning by the seven o'clock train. Paul suggested that Miriam should sleep at the house, because it was so far for her to walk. She came down for supper. Everybody was so excited that even Miriam was accepted with warmth. But almost as soon as she entered the feeling in the family became close and tight. He had discovered a poem by Jean Ingelow which mentioned Mablethorpe, and so he must read it to Miriam. He would never have got so far in the direction of sentimentality as to read poetry to his own family. But now they condescended to listen. Miriam sat on the sofa, absorbed in him. She always seemed absorbed in him, by him, when he was present. Mrs. Morel sat jealous in her own chair. She was going to hear also. A

Annie and the father attended, Morel with his head on one side, like somebody listening to a sermon, being conscious of the fact. Paul ducked his head over his book. He had got now all the audience he cared for. And Mrs. Morel and Annie almost contested with him who should listen best and win his favour. He was very high feather.

"But," interrupted Mrs. Morel, "what is the 'Bride Derby' that the bells are supposed to ring?"

"It's an old tune they used to play on the bells for warning against water. I suppose the Bride of Enderby was drowned in a flood," he replied. He had not the least knowledge what it really was, but he would have sunk so low as to confess that to his womenfolk. Annie listened and believed him. He believed himself. And the people knew what that tune meant?" said the other.

"Yes — just like the Scotch when they heard 'The Hounds o' the Forest' — and when they used to ring the bells backward for alarm."

"Now?" said Annie. "A bell sounds the same whether rung backwards or forwards."

"But," he said, "if you start with the deep bell and go up to the high one — der — der — der — der — der — der — der!"

He ran up the scale. Everybody thought it clever. He thought so too. Then, waiting a minute, he continued the

"I'm!" said Mrs. Morel curiously, when he finished.

"I wish everything that's written were n't so

"I canna see what they want drownin' theirselves for," said Morel.

There was a pause. Annie got up to clear the table.

Maryam rose to help with the pots.

"Let me help to wash up," she said.

"Certainly not," cried Annie. "You sit down again. You are n't many."

And Miriam, who could not be familiar and insist down again to look at the book with Paul.

He was master of the party; his father was no g And great tortures he suffered lest the tin box shoul put out at Firsby instead of at Mablethorpe. And was n't equal to getting a carriage. His bold little mo did that.

"Here!" she cried to a man. "Here!"

Paul and Annie got behind the rest, convulsed shamed laughter.

"How much will it be to drive to Brook Cottage?" Mrs. Morel.

"Two shillings."

"Why, how far is it?"

"A good way."

"I don't believe it," she said.

But she scrambled in. There were eight crowded one old seaside carriage.

"You see," said Mrs. Morel, "it's only threepence each, and if it were a tram-car —"

They drove along. Each cottage they came to, Mrs. Morel cried:

"Is it this? Now, this is it!"

Everybody sat breathless. They drove past. There was a universal sigh.

"I'm thankful it was n't that brute," said Mrs. Morel.

"I was frightened." They drove on and on.

At last they descended at a house that stood alone on the dyke by the highroad. There was wild excitement because they had to cross a little bridge to get into front garden. But they loved the house that lay so stately, with a sea-meadow on one side, and immense expanses of land patched in white barley, yellow oats, red wheats and green root-crops, flat and stretching level to the sky.

Paul kept accounts. He and his mother ran the shop. The total expenses — lodging, food, everything — was sixteen shillings a week per person. He and Leonard

ng in the morning. Morel was wandering abroad early.

"You, Paul," his mother called from the bedroom, "eat some bread-and-butter."

"All right," he answered.

When he got back he saw his mother presiding in at the breakfast-table. The woman of the house was Mrs. Morel always washed the pots in the kitchen and the beds.

"But you said you'd have a real holiday," said Paul, "now you work."

"Work!" she exclaimed. "What are you talking about!"

Miriam loved to go with her across the fields to the village by the sea. She was afraid of the plank bridges, and used her for being a baby. On the whole he stuck to her as if he were *her* man.

Miriam did not get much of him, except, perhaps, when the others went to the "Coons." Coons were insufferably stupid to Miriam, so he thought they were to himself also, and he preached priggishly to Annie about the folly of listening to them. Yet he, too, knew all their songs, and sang them along the roads roisterously. And he found himself listening, the stupidity pleased him much. Yet to Annie he said:

"Such rot! there isn't a grain of intelligence in it. Only with more gumption than a grasshopper could I sit and listen." And to Miriam he said, with much interest, of Annie and the others: "I suppose they're at the Coons."

It was queer to see Miriam singing coon songs. She had a high chin that went in a perpendicular line from her lip to the turn. She always reminded Paul of a sad Botticelli angel when she sang, even when it

*"Come down lover's lane  
For a walk with me, talk with me."*

"Very well," said his mother cuttingly, "then *do* you like." And she took no further notice of him this evening. Which he pretended neither to notice nor care about, but sat reading. Miriam read also, obliterating herself. Mrs. Morel hated her for making her like this. She watched Paul growing irritable, priggish and melancholic. For this she put the blame on Miriam. Annie and all her friends joined against the girl. Miriam had no friend of her own, only Paul. But she did suffer so much, because she despised the triviality of the other people.

And Paul hated her because, somehow, she spoilt his ease and naturalness. And he writhed himself with a feeling of humiliation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### STRIFE IN LOVE

ARTHUR finished his apprenticeship, and got a job on the electrical plant at Minton Pit. He earned very little, but had a good chance of getting on. But he was bad and restless. He did not drink nor gamble. Yet somehow contrived to get into endless scrapes, always through some hot-headed thoughtlessness. Either he went tramping in the woods, like a poacher, or he stayed in Tittingham all night instead of coming home, or he misjudged his dive into the canal at Bestwood, and scored a chest into one mass of wounds on the raw stones and sand at the bottom.

He had not been at his work many months when again he did not come home at night.

"Do you know where Arthur is?" asked Paul at breakfast.

"I do not," replied his mother.

"He is a fool," said Paul. "And if he *did* anything I shouldn't mind. But no, he simply can't come away from a game of whist, or else he must see a girl home from the skating-rink — quite proprietously — and so can't get home. He's a fool."

"I don't know that it would make it any better if he did something to make us all ashamed," said Mrs. Rel.

"Well, I should respect him more," said Paul.

"I very much doubt it," said his mother coldly.

They went on with breakfast.

"Are you fearfully fond of him?" Paul asked his mother.

"What do you ask that for?"

"Because they say a woman always likes the youngest best."

"She may do — but I don't. No, he wearies me."

"And you'd actually rather he was good?"

"I'd rather he showed some of a man's common sense."

Paul was raw and irritable. He also wearied his mother very often. She saw the sunshine going out of him, and she resented it.

As they were finishing breakfast came the postman with a letter from Derby. Mrs. Morel screwed up her eyes to check all the address.

"Give it here, blind eye!" exclaimed her son, snatching it away from her.

The son started, and almost boxed his ears.

"It's from your son Arthur," he said.

"What now — !" cried Mrs. Morel.

"'My dearest Mother,'" Paul read, "'I don't know what made me such a fool. I want you to come and fetch me back from here. I came with Jack Bredon yesterday, instead of going to work, and enlisted. He said he was sick of wearing the seat of a stool out, and, like the idiot you know I am, I came away with him.'

"'I have taken the King's shilling, but perhaps if you came for me they would let me go back with you. I was a fool when I did it. I don't want to be in the army. My dear mother, I am nothing but a trouble to you. But if you get me out of this, I promise I will have more sense and consideration. . . .'"

Mrs. Morel sat down in her rocking-chair.

"Well, now," she cried, "let him stop!"

"Yes," said Paul, "let him stop."

There was silence. The mother sat with her hands folded in her apron, her face set, thinking.

"If I'm not sick!" she cried suddenly. "Sick!"

"Now," said Paul, beginning to frown, "you're not going to worry your soul out about this, do you hear?"

"I suppose I'm to take it as a blessing," she flashed turning on her son.

You 're not going to mount it up to a tragedy, so," he retorted.

The *fool!* — the young *fool!*" she cried.

He 'll look well in uniform," said Paul irritably.  
s mother turned on him like a fury.

Oh, will he!" she cried. "Not in my eyes!"

He should get in a cavalry regiment; he 'll have the  
of his life, and will look an awful swell."

*swell!* — *swell!* — a mighty swell indeed! — a com-  
soldier!"

Well," said Paul, "what am I but a common clerk?"  
A good deal, my boy!" cried his mother, stung.

What?"

It any rate, a *man*, and not a thing in a red

should n't mind being in a red coat — or dark blue,  
would suit me better — if they did n't boss me about  
uch."

t his mother had ceased to listen.

ust as he was getting on, or might have been getting  
t his job — a young nuisance — here he goes and  
himself for life. What good will he be, do you think,  
*this?*"

t may lick him into shape beautifully," said Paul.  
lick him into shape! — lick what marrow there *was*  
t his bones. A *soldier!* — a common *soldier!* — noth-  
ut a body that makes movements when it hears a  
! It 's a fine thing!"

can't understand why it upsets you," said Paul.

o, perhaps you can't. But *I* understand"; and she  
ack in her chair, her chin in one hand, holding her  
with the other, brimmed up with wrath and chagrin.

nd shall you go to Derby?" asked Paul.

es."

t 's no good."

'll see for myself."

nd why on earth don't you let him stop? It 's just  
he wants."

"Of course," cried the mother, "you know what wants!"

She got ready and went by the first train to Derby where she saw her son and the sergeant. It was, however, no good.

When Morel was having his dinner in the evening, said suddenly:

"I've had to go to Derby to-day."

The miner turned up his eyes, showing the whites in black face.

"Has ter, lass? What took thee there?"

"That Arthur!"

"Oh — an' what's agate now?"

"He's only enlisted."

Morel put down his knife and leaned back in his chair.

"Nay," he said, "that he niver 'as!"

"And is going down to Aldershot to-morrow."

"Well!" exclaimed the miner. "That's a wind-up. He considered it a moment, said "H'm!" and proceeded with his dinner. Suddenly his face contracted with wrath. "I hope he may never set foot i' my house again," said.

"The idea!" cried Mrs. Morel. "Saying such a thing!"

"I do," repeated Morel. "A fool as runs away from a soldier, let 'im look after 'issen; I s'll do no more with 'im."

"A fat sight you have done as it is," she said.

And Morel was almost ashamed to go to his public house that evening.

"Well, did you go?" said Paul to his mother when he came home.

"I did."

"And could you see him?"

"Yes."

"And what did he say?"

"He blubbered when I came away."

"H'm!"

"And so did I, so you need n't 'h'm'!"

Mrs. Morel fretted after her son. She knew he would not like the army. He did not. The discipline was intolerable to him.

"But the doctor," she said with some pride to Paul, "said he was perfectly proportioned — almost exactly; all his measurements were correct. He *is* good-looking, you know."

"He's awfully nice-looking. But he does n't fetch the girls like William, does he?"

"No; it's a different character. He's a good deal like his father, irresponsible."

To console his mother, Paul did not go much to Willey farm at this time. And in the autumn exhibition of students' work in the Castle he had two studies, a landscape in water-colour and a still life in oil, both of which had first-prize awards. He was highly excited.

"What do you think I've got for my pictures, other?" he asked, coming home one evening. She saw by his eyes he was glad. Her face flushed.

"Now, how should I know, my boy!"

"A first prize for those glass jars —"

"H'm!"

"And a first prize for that sketch up at Willey farm."

"Both first?"

"Yes."

"H'm!"

There was a rosy, bright look about her, though she said nothing.

"It's nice," he said, "is n't it?"

"It is."

"Why don't you praise me up to the skies?"  
She laughed.

"I should have the trouble of dragging you down again," she said.

But she was full of joy, nevertheless. William had brought her his *sporting* trophies. She kept them still,

and she did not forgive his death. Arthur was handsome — at least, a good specimen — and warm and generous, and probably would do well in the end. But Paul was going to distinguish himself. She had a great belief in him, the more because he was unaware of his own powers. There was so much to come out of him. Life for her was rich with promise. She was to see herself fulfilled. Not for nothing had been her struggle.

Several times during the exhibition Mrs. Morel went to the Castle unknown to Paul. She wandered down the long room looking at the other exhibits. Yes, they were good. But they had not in them a certain something which she demanded for her satisfaction. Some made her jealous, they were so good. She looked at them a long time trying to find fault with them. Then suddenly she had a shock that made her heart beat. There hung Paul's picture! She knew it as if it were printed on her heart.

"Name — Paul Morel — First Prize."

It looked so strange, there in public, on the walls of the Castle gallery, where in her lifetime she had seen so many pictures. And she glanced round to see if anyone had noticed her again in front of the same sketch.

But she felt a proud woman. When she met well-dressed ladies going home to the Park, she thought to herself:

"Yes, you look very well — but I wonder if *your* son has two first prizes in the Castle."

And she walked on, as proud a little woman as any in Nottingham. And Paul felt he had done something for her, if only a trifle. All his work was hers.

One day, as he was going up Castle Gate, he met Miriam. He had seen her on the Sunday, and had not expected to meet her in town. She was walking with a rather striking woman, blonde, with a sullen expression, and a defiant carriage. It was strange how Miriam, in her bowed, meditative bearing, looked dwarfed beside this woman with the handsome shoulders. Miriam watched Paul searchingly. His gaze was on the stranger,

ored him. The girl saw his masculine spirit rear its head.

"Hello!" he said, "you did n't tell me you were coming to town."

"No," replied Miriam, half apologetically. "I drove to Cattle Market with father."

He looked at her companion.

"I've told you about Mrs. Dawes," said Miriam skily; she was nervous. "Clara, do you know Paul?" "I think I've seen him before," replied Mrs. Dawes inferentially, as she shook hands with him. She had scornful grey eyes, a skin like white honey, and a full mouth, with slightly lifted upper lip that did not know whether it was raised in scorn of all men or out of eagerness to be kissed, it which believed the former. She carried her head back, if she had drawn away in contempt, perhaps from men so. She wore a large, dowdy hat of black beaver, and sort of slightly affected simple dress that made her look like a sack-like. She was evidently poor, and had not much taste. Miriam usually looked nice.

"Where have you seen me?" Paul asked of the woman. She looked at him as if she would not trouble to answer again:

"Walking with Louie Travers," she said.

Louie was one of the "spiral" girls.

"Why, do you know her?" he asked.

She did not answer. He turned to Miriam.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To the Castle."

"What train are you going home by?"

"I am driving with father. I wish you could come too. What time are you free?"

"You know not till eight to-night, damn it!"

And directly the two women moved on.

Paul remembered that Clara Dawes was the daughter of an old friend of Mrs. Leivers. Miriam had sought her because she had once been spiral overseer at Jordan's because her husband, Baxter Dawes, was smith for the

factory, making the irons for cripple instruments, an on. Through her Miriam felt she got into direct con with Jordan's, and could estimate better Paul's posit But Mrs. Dawes was separated from her husband, and taken up Women's Rights. She was supposed to clever. It interested Paul.

Baxter Dawes he knew and disliked. The smith w man of thirty-one or thirty-two. He came occasion through Paul's corner — a big, well-set man, also s ing to look at, and handsome. There was a pect similarity between himself and his wife. He had the white skin, with a clear, golden tinge. His hair wa soft brown, his moustache was golden. And he ha similar defiance in his bearing and manner. But came the difference. His eyes, dark brown and q shifting, were dissolute. They protruded very slig and his eyelids hung over them in a way that was hate. His mouth, too, was sensual. His whole manner of cowed defiance, as if he were ready to knock any down who disapproved of him — perhaps because he r disapproved of himself.

From the first day he had hated Paul. Finding lad's impersonal, deliberate gaze of an artist on his he got into a fury.

"What are yer lookin' at?" he sneered, bullying.

The boy glanced away. But the smith used to s behind the counter and talk to Mr. Pappleworth. speech was dirty, with a kind of rottenness. Agai found the youth with his cool, critical gaze fixed on face. The smith started round as if he had been stu

"What 'r yer lookin' at, three hap'orth o' pap?" snarled.

The boy shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Why yer — !" shouted Dawes.

"Leave him alone," said Mr. Pappleworth, in tha sinuating voice which means "he's only one of your little sops who can't help it."

Since that time the boy used to look at the ma

he came through with the same curious criticism, receding away before he met the smith's eyes. It made the two furious. They hated each other in silence.

Clara Dawes had no children. When she had left her husband the home had been broken up, and she had gone to live with her mother. Dawes lodged with his sister. The same house was a sister-in-law, and somehow Paul knew that this girl, Louie Travers, was now Dawes's man. She was a handsome, insolent hussy, who mocked the youth, and yet flushed if he walked along to the door with her as she went home.

The next time he went to see Miriam it was Saturday evening. She had a fire in the parlour, and was waiting for him. The others, except her father and mother and the young children, had gone out, so the two had the parlour together. It was a long, low, warm room. There were three of Paul's small sketches on the wall, and his photo was on the mantelpiece. On the table and on the old rosewood piano were bowls of coloured leaves. She sat in the arm-chair, she crouched on the hearthrug near his feet. The glow was warm on her handsome, penitent face as she kneeled there like a devotee.

"What did you think of Mrs. Dawes?" she asked sweetly.

"She does n't look very amiable," he replied.

"No, but don't you think she's a fine woman?" she said, in a deep tone.

"Yes — in stature. But without a grain of taste. I like her for some things. Is she disagreeable?"

"I don't think so. I think she's dissatisfied."

"What with?"

"Well — how would *you* like to be tied for life to a man like that?"

"Why did she marry him, then, if she was to have illusions so soon?"

"Ay, why did she!" repeated Miriam bitterly.

"And I should have thought she had enough fight in her to catch him," he said.

Miriam bowed her head.

"Ay?" she queried satirically. "What makes you think so?"

"Look at her mouth — made for passion — and the very set-back of her throat —" He threw his head back in Clara's defiant manner.

Miriam bowed a little lower.

"Yes," she said.

There was a silence for some moments, while he thought of Clara.

"And what were the things you liked about her?" she asked.

"I don't know — her skin and the texture of her hair — I don't know — there's a sort of fierceness somewhere in her. I appreciate her as an artist, that's all."

"Yes."

He wondered why Miriam crouched there brooding in that strange way. It irritated him.

"You don't really like her, do you?" he asked the girl.

She looked at him with her great, dazzled dark eyes.

"I do," she said.

"You don't — you can't — not really."

"Then what?" she asked slowly.

"Eh, I don't know — perhaps you like her because she's got a grudge against men."

That was more probably one of his own reasons for liking Mrs. Dawes, but this did not occur to him. They were silent. There had come into his forehead a knittery of the brows which was becoming habitual with him, particularly when he was with Miriam. She longed to smooth it away, and she was afraid of it. It seemed the stamp of a man who was not her man in Paul Morel.

There were some crimson berries among the leaves in the bowl. He reached over and pulled out a bunch.

"If you put red berries in your hair," he said, "would you look like some witch or priestess, and never be a reveller?"

She laughed with a naked, painful sound.

"I don't know," she said.

His vigorous warm hands were playing excitedly with berries.

"Why can't you laugh?" he said. "You never laugh lighter. You only laugh when something is odd or ingenuous, and then it almost seems to hurt you."

She bowed her head as if he were scolding her.

"I wish you could laugh at me just for one minute — st for one minute. I feel as if it would set something e."

"But" — and she looked up at him with eyes frightened and struggling — "I do laugh at you — I do."

"Never! There's always a kind of intensity. When u laugh I could always cry; it seems as if it shows up ur suffering. Oh, you make me knit the brows of my ry soul and cogitate."

Slowly she shook her head despairingly.

"I'm sure I don't want to," she said.

"I'm so damned spiritual with *you* always!" he cried. She remained silent, thinking, "Then why don't you be ierwise?" But he saw her crouching, brooding figure, d it seemed to tear him in two.

"But there, it's autumn," he said, "and everybody ls like a disembodied spirit then."

There was still another silence. This peculiar sadness tween them thrilled her soul. He seemed so beautiful, th his eyes gone dark, and looking as if they were deep the deepest well.

"You make me so spiritual!" he lamented. "And I n't want to be spiritual."

She took her finger from her mouth with a little pop, d looked up at him almost challenging. But still her il was naked in her great dark eyes, and there was the ne yearning appeal upon her. If he could have kissed in abstract purity he would have done so. But he ld not kiss her thus — and she seemed to leave no other y. *And she yearned to him.*

He gave a brief laugh.

"Well," he said, "get that French and we'll do some — some Verlaine."

"Yes," she said in a deep tone, almost of resignation. And she rose and got the books. And her rather red, nervous hands looked so pitiful, he was mad to comfort her and kiss her. But then he dared not — or could not. There was something prevented him. His kisses were wrong for her. They continued the reading till ten o'clock, when they went into the kitchen, and Paul was natural and jolly again with the father and mother. His eyes were dark and shining; there was a kind of fascination about him.

When he went into the barn for his bicycle he found the front wheel punctured.

"Fetch me a drop of water in a bowl," he said to her. "I shall be late, and then I'll catch it."

He lighted the hurricane lamp, took off his coat, turned up the bicycle, and set speedily to work. Miriam came with the bowl of water and stood close to him, watching. She loved to see his hands doing things. He was slim and vigorous, with a kind of easiness even in his most hasty movements. And busy at his work, he seemed to forget her. She loved him absorbedly. She wanted to run her hands down his sides. She always wanted to embrace him, so long as he did not want her.

"There!" he said, rising suddenly. "Now, could you have done it quicker?"

"No!" she laughed.

He straightened himself. His back was towards her. She put her two hands on his sides, and ran them quickly down.

"You are so fine!" she said.

He laughed, hating her voice, but his blood roused to a wave of flame by her hands. She did not seem to realize him in all this. He might have been an object. She never realized the male he was.

He lighted his bicycle-lamp, bounced the machine on

floor to see that the tyres were sound, and buttoned at.

"That's all right!" he said.

"I was trying the brakes, that she knew were broken. Did you have them mended?" she asked.

"No!"

"But why did n't you?"

"The back one goes on a bit."

"But it's not safe."

"I can use my toe."

"I wish you'd had them mended," she murmured.

"Don't worry — come to tea to-morrow, with Edgar." "Hall we?"

"No — about four. I'll come to meet you."

"Very well."

He was pleased. They went across the dark yard to the gate. Looking across, he saw through the uncurtained window of the kitchen the heads of Mr. and Mrs. Leivers in the warm glow. It looked very cosy. The road, with trees, was quite black in front.

"Till to-morrow," he said, jumping on his bicycle.

"You'll take care, won't you?" she pleaded.

"Yes."

Her voice already came out of the darkness. She stood silent watching the light from his lamp race into the darkness along the ground. She turned very slowly in. Orion was wheeling up over the wood, his dog barking after him, half smothered. For the rest, the world was full of darkness, and silent, save for the breathing of cattle in their stalls. She prayed earnestly for his safety that night. When he left her, she often lay in bed, wondering if he had got home safely.

He dropped down the hills on his bicycle. The roads were greasy, so he had to let it go. He felt a pleasure as the machine plunged over the second, steeper drop in the hill. "Here goes!" he said. It was risky, because of the drivers' waggons with drunken waggoners asleep in the darkness at the bottom, and because

His bicycle seemed to fall beneath him, and he loved it. Recklessness is almost a man's revenge on his woman. He feels he is not valued, so he will risk destroying himself to deprive her altogether.

The stars on the lake seemed to leap like grasshoppers of silver upon the blackness, as he spun past. Then there was the long climb home.

"See, mother!" he said, as he threw her the berries and leaves on to the table.

"H'm!" she said, glancing at them, then away again. She sat reading, alone, as she always did.

"Are n't they pretty?"

"Yes."

He knew she was cross with him. After a few minutes he said:

"Edgar and Miriam are coming to tea to-morrow."

She did not answer.

"You don't mind?"

Still she did not answer.

"Do you?" he asked.

"You know whether I mind or not."

"I don't see why you should. I have plenty of meat there."

"You do."

"Then why do you begrudge them tea?"

"I begrudge whom tea?"

"What are you so horrid for?"

"Oh, say no more! You've asked her to tea, it's quite sufficient. She'll come."

He was very angry with his mother. He knew it was merely Miriam she objected to. He flung off his boots and went to bed.

Paul went to meet his friends the next afternoon. He was glad to see them coming. They arrived home at about four o'clock. Everywhere was clean and still for Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Morel sat in her black dress and black apron. She rose to meet the visitors. With Edgar she was cordial, but with Miriam cold and rather grudging.

aul thought the girl looked so nice in her brown cash-frock.

helped his mother to get the tea ready. Miriam have gladly proffered, but was afraid. He was proud of his home. There was about it now, he ht, a certain distinction. The chairs were only n, and the sofa was old. But the hearthrug and ns were cosy; the pictures were prints in good there was a simplicity in everything, and plenty ks. He was never ashamed in the least of his home, as Miriam of hers, because both were what they l be, and warm. And then he was proud of the the china was pretty, the cloth was fine. It did atter that the spoons were not silver nor the knives handled; everything looked nice. Mrs. Morel had ged wonderfully while her children were growing that nothing was out of place.

Miriam talked books a little. That was her unfailing But Mrs. Morel was not cordial, and turned soon gar.

first Edgar and Miriam used to go into Mrs. Morel's Morel never went to chapel, preferring the public-

Mrs. Morel, like a little champion, sat at the head pew, Paul at the other end; and at first Miriam sat to him. Then the chapel was like home. It was ty place, with dark pews and slim, elegant pillars,owers. And the same people had sat in the same ever since he was a boy. It was wonderfully sweet othing to sit there for an hour and a half, next riam, and near to his mother, uniting his two loves the spell of the place of worship. Then he felt and happy and religious at once. And after chapel ked home with Miriam, whilst Mrs. Morel spent the f the evening with her old friend, Mrs. Burns. He enly alive on his walks on Sunday nights with Edgar riam. He never went past the pits at night, by ted lamp-house, the tall black head-stocks and line ks, past the fans spinning slowly like shadow

without the feeling of Miriam returning to him, keen and almost unbearable.

She did not very long occupy the Morels' pew. Her father took one for themselves once more. It was under the little gallery, opposite the Morels'. When Paul and his mother came in the chapel the Leivers' pew was always empty. He was anxious for fear she would not come: it was so far, and there were so many rainy Sundays. Then often very late indeed, she came in, with her long strides, her head bowed, her face hidden under her hat of dark green velvet. Her face, as she sat opposite, was always in shadow. But it gave him a very keen feeling, as if his soul stirred within him, to see her there. It was the same glow, happiness, and pride, that he felt in having his mother in charge: something more wonderful, less human, and tinged to intensity by a pain, as if there were something he could not get to.

At this time he was beginning to question the orthodox creed. He was twenty-one, and she was twenty. She was beginning to dread the spring: he became so wild, and hurt her so much. All the way he went cruelly smashing her beliefs. Edgar enjoyed it. He was by nature critical and rather dispassionate. But Miriam suffered exquisite pain, as, with an intellect like a knife, the man she loved examined her religion in which she lived and moved and had her being. But he did not spare her. He was cruel. And when they went alone he was even more fierce, as if he would kill her soul. He bled her beliefs till she almost lost consciousness.

"She exults — she exults as she carries him off from me," Mrs. Morel cried in her heart when Paul had gone. "She's not like an ordinary woman, who can leave me my share in him. She wants to absorb him. She wants to draw him out and absorb him till there is nothing left of him, even for himself. He will never be a man on his own feet — she will suck him up." So the mother sat, and battled and brooded bitterly.

*And he, coming home from his walks with Miriam,*

with torture. He walked biting his lips and with clenched fists, going at a great rate. Then, brought up past a stile, he stood for some minutes, and did not move. There was a great hollow of darkness fronting him, on the black up-slopes patches of tiny lights, and in lowest trough of the night, a flare of the pit. It was weird and dreadful. Why was he torn so, almost bereaved, and unable to move? Why did his mother sit alone and suffer? He knew she suffered badly. But should she? And why did he hate Miriam, and feel cruel towards her, at the thought of his mother. If I am caused his mother suffering, then he hated her — he easily hated her. Why did she make him feel as if he were uncertain of himself, insecure, an indefinite being, as if he had not sufficient sheathing to prevent the world and the space breaking into him? How he hated her!

And then, what a rush of tenderness and pity!

Suddenly he plunged on again, running home. His mother saw on him the marks of some agony, and she said nothing. But he had to make her talk to him. She was angry with him for going so far with him.

"Why don't you like her, mother?" he cried in despair. "I don't know, my boy," she replied piteously. "I'm sorry I've tried to like her. I've tried and tried, but I can't — I can't!"

And he felt dreary and hopeless between the two. Spring was the worst time. He was changeable, and untrue, and cruel. So he decided to stay away from her. There came the hours when he knew Miriam was expecting him.

His mother watched him growing restless. He could go on with his work. He could do nothing. It was something were drawing his soul out towards Willey. Then he put on his hat and went, saying nothing. His mother knew he was gone. And as soon as he was out of sight he sighed with relief. And when he was within sight again.

thority. And in her heart of hearts, unconsciously, she felt that he was trying to get away from her. This she would never have acknowledged. She pitied him.

At this time Paul became an important factor in Jordan's warehouse. Mr. Pappleworth left to set up a business of his own, and Paul remained with Mr. Jordan as spiral overseer. His wages were to be raised to thirty shillings at the year-end, if things went well.

Still on Friday night Miriam often came down for her French lesson. Paul did not go so frequently to Willey Farm, and she grieved at the thought of her education's coming to an end; moreover, they both loved to be together, in spite of discords. So they read Balzac, and did compositions, and felt highly cultured.

Friday night was reckoning night for the miners. Morel "reckoned"—shared up the money at the stall—either in the New Inn at Brett or in his own house according as his fellow-butties wished. Barker had turned a non-drinker, so now the men reckoned at Morel's house.

Annie, who had been teaching away, was at home again. She was still a tomboy; and she was engaged to be married. Paul was studying design.

Morel was always in good spirits on Friday evening unless the week's earnings were small. He hustled immediately after his dinner, prepared to get washed. It was decorum for the women to absent themselves while the men reckoned. Women were not supposed to spy into such a masculine privacy as the butties' reckoning, nor were they to know the exact amount of the week's earnings. So, whilst her father was spluttering in the scullery, Annie went out to spend an hour with a neighbour. Mrs. Morel attended to her baking.

"Shut that doo-er!" bawled Morel furiously.

Annie banged it behind her, and was gone.

"If tha oppens it again while I'm weshin' me, I'll ma'e thy jaw rattle," he threatened from the midst of his soapsuds. Paul and the mother frowned to hear him.

ntly he came running out of the scullery, with the water dripping from him, dithering with cold.

"my sirs!" he said. "Wheer 's my towel?"  
s hung on a chair to warm before the fire, otherwise d have bullied and blustered. He squatted on his before the hot baking-fire to dry himself.

f-f!" he went, pretending to shudder with cold.  
odness, man, don't be such a kid!" said Mrs. Morel.  
*not* cold."

ee strip thysen stark nak'd to wesh thy flesh i' scullery," said the miner, as he rubbed his hair;  
b'r a ice-'ouse!"

I should n't make that fuss," replied his wife.  
, tha 'd drop down stiff, as dead as a door-knob,  
nesh sides."

y is a door-knob deader than anything else?"  
aul, curious.

, I dunno; that 's what they say," replied his  
"But there 's that much draught i' yon scullery,  
ows through your ribs like through a five-barred

would have some difficulty in blowing through  
said Mrs. Morel.

I looked down ruefully at his sides.

!" he exclaimed. "I 'm nowt b'r a skinned rab-  
y bones fair juts out on me."

ould like to know where," retorted his wife.

'y-wheer! I 'm nobbut a sack o' faggots."

Morel laughed. He had still a wonderfully young muscular, without any fat. His skin was smooth as a star. It might have been the body of a man of eight, except that there were, perhaps, too many scars, like tattoo-marks, where the coal-dust remained on the skin, and that his chest was too hairy. But he laid his hand on his sides ruefully. It was his fixed belief that he did not get fat, he was as thin as a starved

*looked at his father's thick, brownish hands*

scarred, with broken nails, rubbing the fine smoothness of his sides, and the incongruity struck him. It seemed strange they were the same flesh.

"I suppose," he said to his father, "you had a good figure once."

"Eh!" exclaimed the miner, glancing round, startled and timid, like a child.

"He had," exclaimed Mrs. Morel, "if he did n't hurt himself up as if he was trying to get in the smallest space he could."

"Me!" exclaimed Morel — "me a good figure! I wot niver much more n'r a skeleton."

"Man!" cried his wife, "don't be such a pulamiter!"

"Strewth!" he said. "Tha's niver knowed me but what I looked as if I wor goin' off in a rapid decline."

She sat and laughed.

"You've had a constitution like iron," she said; "and never a man had a better start, if it was body that counted. You should have seen him as a young man," she cried suddenly to Paul, drawing herself up to imitate her husband's once handsome bearing.

Morel watched her shyly. He saw again the passion she had had for him. It blazed upon her for a moment. He was shy, rather scared, and humble. Yet again he felt his old glow. And then immediately he felt the rust he had made during these years. He wanted to bustle about, to run away from it.

"Gi'e my back a bit of a wesh," he asked her.

His wife brought a well-soaped flannel and clapped it on his shoulders. He gave a jump.

"Eh, tha mucky little 'ussy!" he cried. "Cowd ya death!"

"You ought to have been a salamander," she laughed, washing his back. It was very rarely she would do ~~any~~ <sup>other</sup> thing so personal for him. The children did those things.

"The next world won't be half hot enough for you," she added.

"No," he said; "tha 'lt see as it's draughty for me."

at she had finished. She wiped him in a desultory fashion, and went upstairs, returning immediately with shifting-trousers. When he was dried he struggled into shirt. Then, ruddy and shiny, with hair on end, and flannelette shirt hanging over his pit-trousers, he began warming the garments he was going to put on. He tried them, he pulled them inside out, he scorched them. "Goodness, man!" cried Mrs. Morel; "get dressed!" Should thee like to clap thyself into britches as cowd tub o' water?" he said.

At last he took off his pit-trousers and donned decent ones. He did all this on the hearthrug, as he would have done if Annie and her familiar friends had been present.

Mrs. Morel turned the bread in the oven. Then from a red earthenware panchion of dough that stood in a corner she took another handful of paste, worked it to the right shape, and dropped it into a tin. As she was doing so Barker knocked and entered. He was a quiet, compact little man, who looked as if he would go through the wall. His black hair was cropped short, his head bony. Like most miners, he was pale, but healthy and taut.

"Evenin', missis," he nodded to Mrs. Morel, and he covered himself with a sigh.

"Good-evening," she replied cordially.

"Tha's made thy heels crack," said Morel.

"I dunno as I have," said Barker.

He sat, as the men always did in Mrs. Morel's kitchen, covering himself rather.

"How's missis?" she asked of him.

"He had told her some time back:

"We're expectin' us third just now, you see."

"Well," he answered, rubbing his head, "she keeps pretty middlin', I think."

"Let's see — when?" asked Mrs. Morel.

"Well, I should n't be surprised any time now."

"Ah! And she's kept fairly?"

"Yes, tidy."

"That's a blessing, for she's none too strong."

"No. An' I've done another silly trick."

"What's that?"

Mrs. Morel knew Barker would n't do anything ~~ve~~ silly.

"I'm come be-out th' market-bag."

"You can have mine."

"Nay, you'll be wantin' that yourself."

"I shan't. I take a string bag always."

She saw the determined little collier buying in the week groceries and meat on the Friday nights, and she admires him. "Barker's little, but he's ten times the man you are," she said to her husband.

Just then Wesson entered. He was thin, rather frail looking, with a boyish ingenuousness and a slightly foolish smile, despite his seven children. But his wife was a passionate woman.

"I see you've kested me," he said, smiling rather rapidly.

"Yes," replied Barker.

The newcomer took off his cap and his big woolly muffler. His nose was pointed and red.

"I'm afraid you're cold, Mr. Wesson," said Mrs. Morel.

"It's a bit nippy," he replied.

"Then come to the fire."

"Nay, I s'll do where I am."

Both colliers sat away back. They could not be induced to come on to the hearth. The hearth is sacred to family.

"Go thy ways i' th' arm-chair," cried Morel cheerily.

"Nay, thank yer; I'm very nicely here."

"Yes, come, of course," insisted Mrs. Morel.

He rose and went awkwardly. He sat in Morel's chair awkwardly. It was too great a familiarity. The fire made him blissfully happy.

"And how's that chest of yours?" demanded Mrs. Morel.

smiled again, with his blue eyes rather sunny.  
th, it 's very middlin'," he said.

"Vi' a rattle in it like a kettle-drum," said Barker  
ly.

"t-t-t!" went Mrs. Morel rapidly with her tongue.  
you have that flannel singlet made?"  
ot yet," he smiled.

Then, why did n't you?" she cried.  
t 'll come," he smiled.

"Ah, an' Doomsday!" exclaimed Barker.

rker and Morel were both impatient of Wesson.  
then, they were both as hard as nails, physically.

hen Morel was nearly ready he pushed the bag of  
y to Paul.

Count it, boy," he asked humbly.

ul impatiently turned from his books and pencil,  
d the bag upside down on the table. There was a  
ound bag of silver, sovereigns and loose money. He  
ed quickly, referred to the checks — the written  
rs giving amount of coal — put the money in order.

Barker glanced at the checks.

s. Morel went upstairs, and the three men came to  
Morel, as master of the house, sat in his arm-  
, with his back to the hot fire. The two butties had  
r seats. None of them counted the money.

What did we say Simpson's was?" asked Morel; and  
utties cavilled for a minute over the dayman's earn-

Then the amount was put aside.

An' Bill Naylor's?"

This money also was taken from the pack.

en, because Wesson lived in one of the company's  
s, and his rent had been deducted, Morel and Barker  
four-and-six each. And because Morel's coals had  
, and the leading was stopped, Barker and Wesson  
four shillings each. Then it was plain sailing.  
d gave each of them a sovereign till there were no  
sovereigns; each half a crown till there were no  
half-crowns; each a shilling till there were no m-

shillings. If there was anything at the end that wouldn't split, Morel took it and stood drinks.

Then the three men rose and went. Morel scuttled out of the house before his wife came down. She heard the door close, and descended. She looked hastily at the bread in the oven. Then, glancing on the table, she saw her money lying. Paul had been working all the time. But now he felt his mother counting the week's money, and her wrath rising.

"T-t-t-t-t!" went her tongue.

He frowned. He could not work when she was cross. She counted again.

"A measly twenty-five shillings!" she exclaimed.  
"How much was the cheque?"

"Ten pounds eleven," said Paul irritably. He dreaded what was coming.

"And he gives me a scrattlin' twenty-five, an' his chancery this week! But I know him. He thinks because you're earning he need n't keep the house any longer. No, he has to do with his money is to guttle it. But I'll show him!"

"Oh, mother, don't!" cried Paul.

"Don't what, I should like to know?" she exclaimed.

"Don't carry on again. I can't work."

She went very quiet.

"Yes, it's all very well," she said; "but how do you think I'm going to manage?"

"Well, it won't make it any better to whittle about it."

"I should like to know what you'd do if you had to put up with."

"It won't be long. You can have my money. Let him go to hell."

He went back to his work, and she tied her bonnet strings grimly. When she was fretted he could not bear it. But now he began to insist on her recognizing him.

"The two loaves at the top," she said, "will be done in twenty minutes. Don't forget them."

"All right," he answered; and she went to market. He remained alone working. But his usual intense concentration became unsettled. He listened for the third-gate. At a quarter-past seven came a low knock, and Miriam entered.

"All alone?" she said.

"Yes."

As if at home, she took off her tam-o'-shanter and her grey coat, hanging them up. It gave him a thrill. This might be their own house, his and hers. Then she came back and peered over his work.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Still design, for decorating stuffs, and for embroidery."

She bent short-sightedly over the drawings.

It irritated him that she peered so into everything that was his, searching him out. He went into the parlour and turned with a bundle of brownish linen. Carefully undressing it, he spread it on the floor. It proved to be a curtain or *portière*, beautifully stencilled with a design of roses.

"Ah, how beautiful!" she cried.

The spread cloth, with its wonderful reddish roses and dark green stems, all so simple, and somehow so wicked-looking, lay at her feet. She went on her knees before it, her dark curls dropping. He saw her crouched voluptuously before his work, and his heart beat quickly. Suddenly she looked up at him.

"Why does it seem cruel?" she asked.

"What?"

"There seems a feeling of cruelty about it," she said.

"It's jolly good, whether or not," he replied, folding his work with a lover's hands.

She rose slowly, pondering.

"And what will you do with it?" she asked.

"Send it to *Liberty's*. I did it for my mother, but I think she'd rather have the money."

"Yes," said Miriam. He had spoken with a touch of

bitterness, and Miriam sympathized. Money would have been nothing to *her*.

He took the cloth back into the parlour. When he turned, he threw to Miriam a smaller piece. It was cushion-cover with the same design.

"I did that for you," he said.

She fingered the work with trembling hands, and did not speak. He became embarrassed.

"By Jove, the bread!" he cried.

He took the top loaves out, tapped them vigorously. They were done. He put them on the hearth to cool. Then he went to the scullery, wetted his hands, scooped the last white dough out of the punchion, and dropped it in a baking-tin. Miriam was still bent over her painted cloth. He stood rubbing the bits of dough from his hands.

"You do like it?" he asked.

She looked up at him, with her dark eyes one flame of love. He laughed uncomfortably. Then he began to talk about the design. There was for him the most intense pleasure in talking about his work to Miriam. All his passion, all his wild blood, went into this intercourse with her, when he talked and conceived his work. She brought forth to him his imaginations. She did not understand any more than a woman understands when she conceives a child in her womb. But this was life for her and for him.

While they were talking, a young woman of about twenty-two, small and pale, hollow-eyed, yet with a relentless look about her, entered the room. She was a friend at the Morels'.

"Take your things off," said Paul.

"No, I'm not stopping."

She sat down in the arm-chair opposite Paul and Miriam, who were on the sofa. Miriam moved a little farther from him. The room was hot, with a scent of new bread. Brown, crisp loaves stood on the hearth.

"I should n't have expected to see you here to-night, Miriam Leivers," said Beatrice wickedly.

ay not?" murmured Miriam huskily.

"Ay, let's look at your shoes."

Miriam remained uncomfortably still.

"Tha doesna tha durs'na," laughed Beatrice.

Miriam put her feet from under her dress. Her boots had a queer, irresolute, rather pathetic look about them which showed how self-conscious and self-mistrustful she was. And they were covered with mud.

"Owry! You're a positive muck-heap," exclaimed Beatrice. "Who cleans your boots?"

"I lean them myself."

"Then you wanted a job," said Beatrice. "It would have been a lot if men to ha' brought me down here to—But love laughs at sludge, does n't it, 'Postle my

*er alia*," he said.

"Lord! are you going to spout foreign languages? What does it mean, Miriam?"

There was a fine sarcasm in the last question, but Beatrice did not see it.

"Among other things," I believe," she said humbly.

Beatrice put her tongue between her teeth and laughed again.

"Among other things, 'Postle?" she repeated. "Do you know love laughs at mothers, and fathers, and sisters, and brothers, and men friends, and lady friends, and the b'loved himself?"

Beatrice affected a great innocence.

"In fact, it's one big smile," he replied.

"It's its sleeve, 'Postle Morel — you believe me," she said, and she went off into another burst of wicked, silent laughter.

Miriam sat silent, withdrawn into herself. Everyone of her friends delighted in taking sides against her, and left her in the lurch — seemed almost to have a revenge upon her then.

"Are you still at school?" asked Miriam of Beatrice.

" You 've not had your notice, then? "

" I expect it at Easter."

" Is n't it an awful shame, to turn you off merely because you did n't pass the exam? "

" I don't know," said Beatrice coldly.

" Agatha says you 're as good as any teacher anywhere. It seems to me ridiculous. I wonder why you did n't pass."

" Short of brains, eh, 'Postle? " said Beatrice briefly.

" Only brains to bite with," replied Paul, laughing.

" Nuisance! " she cried; and, springing from her seat, she rushed and boxed his ears. She had beautiful small hands. He held her wrists while she wrestled with him. At last she broke free, and seized two handfuls of his thick, dark brown hair, which she shook.

" Beat! " he said, as he pulled his hair straight with his fingers. " I hate you! "

She laughed with glee.

" Mind! " she said. " I want to sit next to you."

" I 'd as lief be neighbours with a vixen," he said, nevertheless making place for her between him and Miriam.

" Did it ruffle his pretty hair, then! " she cried; and with her hair-comb, she combed him straight. " And his nice little moustache! " she exclaimed. She tilted his head back and combed his young moustache. " It 's a wicked moustache, 'Postle," she said. " It 's a red for danger. Have you got any of those cigarettes? "

He pulled his cigarette-case from his pocket. Beatrice looked inside it.

" And fancy me having Connie's last cig," said Beatrice putting the thing between her teeth. He held a lit match to her, and she puffed daintily.

" Thanks so much, darling," she said mockingly.

It gave her a wicked delight.

" Don't you think he does it nicely, Miriam? " she asked.

" Oh, very! " said Miriam.

He took a cigarette for himself.

Light, old boy?" said Beatrice, tilting her cigarette  
im.

He bent forward to her to light his cigarette at hers.  
was winking at him as she did so. Miriam saw his  
trembling with mischief, and his full, almost sensual,  
th quivering. He was not himself, and she could not  
it. As he was now, she had no connection with  
; she might as well not have existed. She saw the  
rette dancing on his full red lips. She hated his  
k hair for being tumbled loose on his forehead.

Sweet boy!" said Beatrice, tipping up his chin and  
ng him a little kiss on the cheek.

I s'll kiss thee back, Beat," he said.

Tha wunna!" she giggled, jumping up and going  
y. " Is n't he shameless, Miriam? "

Quite," said Miriam. " By the way, are n't you for-  
ing the bread? "

By Jove!" he cried, flinging open the oven-door.  
ut puffed the bluish smoke and a smell of burned  
ad.

Oh, golly!" cried Beatrice, coming to his side. He  
uched before the oven, she peered over his shoulder.  
his is what comes of the oblivion of love, my boy."

Paul was ruefully removing the loaves. One was burnt  
ck on the hot side; another was hard as a brick.

Poor mater!" said Paul.

You want to grate it," said Beatrice. " Fetch me the  
meg-grater."

He arranged the bread in the oven. He brought the  
ter, and she grated the bread on to a newspaper on  
table. He set the doors open to blow away the smell  
burned bread. Beatrice grated away, puffing her  
rette, knocking the charcoal off the poor loaf.

My word, Miriam! you 're in for it this time," said  
trice.

I!" exclaimed Miriam in amazement.

You 'd better be gone when his mother comes in.  
why King Alfred burned the cakes. Now I see it

'Postle would fix up a tale about his work making me forget, if he thought it would wash. If that old woman had come in a bit sooner, she'd have boxed the brahmin's ears who made the oblivion, instead of poor Alfred's.'

She giggled as she scraped the loaf. Even Miriam laughed in spite of herself. Paul mended the fire more fully.

The garden-gate was heard to bang.

"Quick!" cried Beatrice, giving Paul the scraped loaf. "Wrap it up in a damp towel."

Paul disappeared into the scullery. Beatrice hastily blew her scrapings into the fire, and sat down innocent. Annie came bursting in. She was an abrupt, quite small young woman. She blinked in the strong light.

"Smell of burning!" she exclaimed.

"It's the cigarettes," replied Beatrice demurely.

"Where's Paul?"

Leonard had followed Annie. He had a long comely face and blue eyes, very sad.

"I suppose he's left you to settle it between you," said. He nodded sympathetically to Miriam, and became gently sarcastic to Beatrice.

"No," said Beatrice, "he's gone off with number nine."

"I just met number five inquiring for him," said Leonard.

"Yes — we're going to share him up like Solomon's baby," said Beatrice.

Annie laughed.

"Oh, ay," said Leonard. "And which bit should I have?"

"I don't know," said Beatrice. "I'll let all the others pick first."

"An' you'd have the leavings, like?" said Leonard, twisting up a comic face.

Annie was looking in the oven. Miriam sat ignorant. Paul entered.

"This bread's a fine sight, our Paul," said Annie.

"Then you should stop an' look after it," said Paul.  
"You mean *you* should do what you're reckoning to  
"replied Annie.

He should, should n't he!" cried Beatrice.  
"I s'd think he'd got plenty on hand," said Leonard.  
"You had a nasty walk, did n't you, Miriam?" said  
nie.

Yes — but I'd been in all week — "  
And you wanted a bit of a change, like," insinuated  
nard kindly.

"Well, you can't be stuck in the house for ever," Annie  
eed. She was quite amiable. Beatrice pulled on her  
t, and went out with Leonard and Annie. She would  
t her own boy.

"Don't forget that bread, our Paul," cried Annie.  
ood-night, Miriam. I don't think it will rain."

When they had all gone, Paul fetched the swathed loaf,  
rapped it, and surveyed it sadly.

It's a mess!" he said.  
But," answered Miriam impatiently, "what is it, after  
— twopence ha'penny."

Yes, but — it's the mater's precious baking, and  
'll take it to heart. However, it's no good bothering."  
He took the loaf back into the scullery. There was a  
le distance between him and Miriam. He stood bal-  
ed opposite her for some moments considering, thinking  
his behaviour with Beatrice. He felt guilty inside him-  
, and yet glad. For some inscrutable reason it served  
riam right. He was not going to repent. She won-  
ed what he was thinking of as he stood suspended.  
thick hair was tumbled over his forehead. Why might  
not push it back for him, and remove the marks of  
trice's comb? Why might she not press his body with  
two hands? It looked so firm, and every whit living.  
f he would let other girls, why not her?

suddenly he started into life. It made her quiver almost  
*i terror as he quickly pushed the hair off his forehead*  
*came towards her.*

"Half-past eight!" he said. "We'd better buck up.  
Where's your French?"

Miriam shyly and rather bitterly produced her exercise-book. Every week she wrote for him a sort of diary of her inner life, in her own French. He had found that it was the only way to get her to do composition. And her diary was mostly a love-letter. He would read it now as she felt as if her soul's history were going to be desecrated by him in his present mood. He sat beside her, watching his hand, firm and warm, rigorously scoring his work. He was reading only the French, ignoring her signature that was there. But gradually his hand forgot its work. He read in silence, motionless. She quivered.

"Ce matin les oiseaux m'ont éveillé," he read. "Il faisait encore un crépuscule. Mais la petite fenêtre de la chambre, était blême, et puis, jaune, et tous les oiseaux du bois éclatèrent dans un chant vif et résonnant. To l'aube tressaillit. J'avais rêvé de vous. Est-ce que vous voyez aussi l'aube? Les oiseaux m'éveillent presque tous les matins, et toujours il y a quelque chose de terrifiant dans le cri des grives. Il est si clair — "

Miriam sat tremulous, half ashamed. He remained quite still, trying to understand. He only knew she loved him. He was afraid of her love for him. It was too great for him, and he was inadequate. His own love was his fault, not hers. Ashamed, he corrected her work, humbly writing above her words.

"Look," he said quietly, "the past participle conjugated with *avoir* agrees with the direct object when it precedes."

She bent forward, trying to see and to understand. Her free, fine curls tickled his face. He started as though they had been red hot, shuddering. He saw her peer forward at the page, her red lips parted piteously, black hair springing in fine strands across her tawny ruddy cheek. She was coloured like a pomegranate in richness. His breath came short as he watched her. Suddenly she looked up at him. Her dark eyes were

their love, afraid, and yearning. His eyes, too, were , and they hurt her. They seemed to master her. lost all her self-control, was exposed in fear. And new, before he could kiss her, he must drive some- out of himself. And a touch of hate for her crept again into his heart. He returned to her exercise. ddenly he flung down the pencil, and was at the in a leap, turning the bread. For Miriam he was quick. She started violently, and it hurt her with pain. Even the way he crouched before the oven her. There seemed to be something cruel in it, thing cruel in the swift way he pitched the bread out e tins, caught it up again. If only he had been gentle s movements she would have felt so rich and warm. was, she was hurt.

He returned and finished the exercise.

"You 've done well this week," he said.

He saw he was flattered by her diary. It did not y her entirely.

"You really do blossom out sometimes," he said.  
"I ought to write poetry."

He lifted her head with joy, then she shook it ustfully.

"I don't trust myself," she said.

"You should try!"

Again she shook her head.

"Shall we read, or is it too late?" he asked.

"It is late—but we can read just a little," she ed.

He was really getting now the food for her life during next week. He made her copy Baudelaire's "Le on." Then he read it for her. His voice was soft caressing, but growing almost brutal. He had a of lifting his lips and showing his teeth, passionately bitterly, when he was much moved. This he did

It made Miriam feel as if he were trampling on  
She dared not look at him, but sat with her hea

She could not understand why he got into su

a tumult and fury. It made her wretched. She did like Baudelaire, on the whole — nor Verlaine.

“Behold her singing in the field,  
Yon solitary highland lass.”

That nourished her heart. So did “Fair In And —

“It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
The holy time is quiet as a Nun.”

These were like herself. And there was he, saying his throat bitterly :

“Tu te rappelas la beauté des caresses.”

The poem was finished; he took the bread out of the oven, arranging the burnt loaves at the bottom of the panchion, the good ones at the top. The desiccated loaf remained swathed up in the scullery.

“Mater need n’t know till morning,” he said. “I won’t upset her so much then as at night.”

Miriam looked in the bookcase, saw what postcards and letters he had received, saw what books were there. She took one that had interested him. Then he turned down the gas, and they set off. He did not trouble to lock the door.

He was not home again until a quarter to eleven. His mother was seated in the rocking-chair. Annie, with a rope of hair hanging down her back, remained sitting on a low stool before the fire, her elbows on her knees, gloomily. On the table stood the offending loaf, swathed. Paul entered rather breathless. No one spoke. His mother was reading the little local newspaper. He took off his coat, and went to sit down on the sofa. His mother moved curiously aside to let him pass. No one spoke. He was very uncomfortable. For some minutes he sat pretending to read a piece of paper he found on the table. Then —

“I forgot that bread, mother,” he said.  
There was no answer from either woman.

"Well," he said, "it's only twopence ha'penny. I  
pay you for that."

Being angry he put three pennies on the table, and  
d them towards his mother. She turned away her head.  
r mouth was shut tightly.

"Yes," said Annie, "you don't know how badly my  
ther is!"

The girl sat staring glumly into the fire.

"Why is she badly?" asked Paul, in his overbearing  
y.

"Well!" said Annie. "She could scarcely get home."

He looked closely at his mother. She looked ill.

"Why could you scarcely get home?" he asked her,  
ll sharply. She would not answer.

"I found her as white as a sheet sitting here," said  
mie, with a suggestion of tears in her voice.

"Well, *why?*" insisted Paul. His brows were kni-  
g, his eyes dilating passionately.

"It was enough to upset anybody," said Mrs. Morel,  
ugging those parcels — meat, and green-groceries, and  
pair of curtains — "

"Well, why *did* you hug them; you need n't have  
ne."

"Then who would?"

"Let Annie fetch the meat."

"Yes, and I *would* fetch the meat, but how was I  
know? You were off with Miriam, instead of being in  
en my mother came."

"And what was the matter with you?" asked Paul of  
mother.

"I suppose it's my heart," she replied. Certainly  
looked bluish round the mouth.

"And have you felt it before?"

"Yes — often enough."

"Then why have n't you told me? — and why have n't  
seen a doctor?"

*Mrs. Morel shifted in her chair, angry with him for  
lectoring.*

" You 'd never notice anything," said Annie. " You 're too eager to be off with Miriam."

" Oh, am I — and any worse than you with Leonard?"

" I was in at a quarter to ten."

There was silence in the room for a time.

" I should have thought," said Mrs. Morel bitterly, " that she would n't have occupied you so entirely as to burn a whole ovenful of bread."

" Beatrice was here as well as she."

" Very likely. But we know why the bread is spoilt."

" Why? " he flashed.

" Because you were engrossed with Miriam," replied Mrs. Morel hotly.

" Oh, very well — then it was *not!* " he replied angrily.

He was distressed and wretched. Seizing a paper, he began to read. Annie, her blouse unfastened, her long ropes of hair twisted into a plait, went up to bed, bidding him a very curt good-night.

Paul sat pretending to read. He knew his mother wanted to upbraid him. He also wanted to know what had made her ill, for he was troubled. So, instead of running away to bed, as he would have liked to do, he sat and waited. There was a tense silence. The clock ticked loudly.

" You 'd better go to bed before your father comes in," said the mother harshly. " And if you 're going to have anything to eat, you 'd better get it."

" I don't want anything."

It was his mother's custom to bring him some trifle for supper on Friday night, the night of luxury for the colliers. He was too angry to go and find it in the pantry this night. This insulted her.

" If I wanted you to go to Selby on Friday night, I can imagine the scene," said Mrs. Morel. " But you 're never too tired to go if she will come for you. Nay, you neither want to eat nor drink then."

" I can't let her go alone."

" Can't you? And why does she come? "

‘Not because I ask her.’

‘She does n’t come without you want her — ’

‘Well, what if I do want her — ’ he replied.

‘Why, nothing if it was sensible or reasonable. But go trapesing up there miles and miles in the mud, ning home at midnight, and got to go to Nottingham the morning — ’

‘If I had n’t, you’d be just the same.’

‘Yes, I should, because there’s no sense in it. Is she fascinating that you must follow her all that way?’

Mrs. Morel was bitterly sarcastic. She sat still, with her face, stroking with a rhythmic, jerked movement of black sateen of her apron. It was a movement that art Paul to see.

‘I do like her,’ he said, ‘but — ’

‘Like her!’ said Mrs. Morel, in the same biting tones. ‘t seems to me you like nothing and nobody else. ere’s neither Annie, nor me, nor anyone now for 1.’

‘What nonsense, mother — you know I don’t love — I — I tell you I don’t love her — she does n’t even lk with my arm, because I don’t want her to.’

‘Then why do you fly to her so often?’

‘I do like to talk to her — I never said I did n’t. But don’t love her.’

‘Is there nobody else to talk to?’

‘Not about the things we talk of. There’s lots of ings that you’re not interested in, that — ’

‘What things?’

Mrs. Morel was so intense that Paul began to pant.

‘Why — painting — and books. You don’t care out Herbert Spencer.’

‘No,’ was the sad reply. ‘And you won’t at my e.’

‘Well, but I do now — and Miriam does — ’

‘And how do you know,’ Mrs. Morel flashed defiantly, at I should n’t? Do you ever try me?’

But you don’t, mother, you know you don’t

whether a picture's decorative or not; you don't care what *manner* it is in."

"How do you know I don't care? Do you ever try me? Do you ever talk to me about these things, to try?"

"But it's not that that matters to you, mother, you know it's not."

"What is it, then — what is it, then, that matters to me?" she flashed. He knitted his brows with pain.

"You're old, mother, and we're young."

He only meant that the interests of *her* age were not the interests of his. But he realized the moment he had spoken that he had said the wrong thing.

"Yes, I know it well — I am old. And therefore I may stand aside; I have nothing more to do with you. You only want me to wait on you — the rest is for Miriam."

He could not bear it. Instinctively he realized that he was life to her. And, after all, she was the chief thing to him, the only supreme thing.

"You know it is n't, mother, you know it is n't!"

She was moved to pity by his cry.

"It looks a great deal like it," she said, half putting aside her despair.

"No, mother — I really *don't* love her. I talk to her, but I want to come home to you."

He had taken off his collar and tie, and rose, bare-throated, to go to bed. As he stooped to kiss his mother, she threw her arms round his neck, hid her face on his shoulder, and cried, in a whimpering voice, so unlike her own that he writhed in agony:

"I can't bear it. I could let another woman — but not her. She'd leave me no room, not a bit of room —"

And immediately he hated Miriam bitterly.

"And I've never — you know, Paul — I've never had a husband — not really —"

He stroked his mother's hair, and his mouth was over throat.

'And she exults so in taking you from me — she's like ordinary girls."

'Well, I don't love her, mother," he murmured, bowing his head and hiding his eyes on her shoulder in misery. Mother kissed him a long, fervent kiss.

'My boy!" she said, in a voice trembling with passionate love.

Without knowing, he gently stroked her face.

'There," said his mother, "now go to bed. You'll be so tired in the morning." As she was speaking she heard her husband coming. "There's your father — go." Suddenly she looked at him almost as if in alarm. "Perhaps I'm selfish. If you want her, take her, boy."

His mother looked so strange, Paul kissed her, trembling.

"Ha — mother!" he said softly.

Morel came in, walking unevenly. His hat was over the corner of his eye. He balanced in the doorway.

At your mischief again?" he said venomously.

Mrs. Morel's emotion turned into sudden hate of the scoundrel who had come in thus upon her.

"At any rate, it is sober," she said.

"H'm — h'm! h'm — h'm!" he sneered. He went into the passage, hung up his hat and coat. Then they heard him go down three steps to the pantry. He returned with a piece of pork-pie in his fist. It was what Mrs. Morel bought for her son.

"Nor was that bought for you. If you can give me more than twenty-five shillings, I'm sure I'm not going to buy you pork-pie to stuff, after you've swilled bellyful of beer."

"Wha-at — wha-at!" snarled Morel, toppling in his gait. "Wha-at — not for me?" He looked at the piece of meat and crust, and suddenly, in a vicious spurt of temper, flung it into the fire. Paul started to his feet.

"Vaste your own stuff!" he cried.

"What — what!" suddenly shouted Morel, jumping up and clenching his fist. "I'll show yer, yer young jockey!"

"All right!" said Paul viciously, putting his head on one side. "Show me!"

He would at that moment dearly have loved to have a smack at something. Morel was half crouching, fists up, ready to spring. The young man stood, smiling with his lips.

"Ussha!" hissed the father, swiping round with a great stroke just past his son's face. He dared not, even though so close, really touch the young man, but swerved an inch away.

"Right!" said Paul, his eyes upon the side of his father's mouth, where in another instant his fist would have hit. He ached for that stroke. But he heard a faint moan from behind. His mother was deadly pale, dark at the mouth. Morel was dancing up to deliver another blow.

"Father!" said Paul, so that the word rang.

Morel started, and stood at attention.

"Mother!" moaned the boy. "Mother!"

She began to struggle with herself. Her open eyes watched him, although she could not move. Gradually she was coming to herself. He laid her down on the sofa, and ran upstairs for a little whisky, which at last she could sip. The tears were hopping down his face. As he kneeled in front of her he did not cry, but the tears ran down his face quickly. Morel, on the opposite side of the room, sat with his elbows on his knees glaring across.

"What's a-matter with 'er?" he asked.

"Faint!" replied Paul.

"H'm!"

The elderly man began to unlace his boots. He stumbled off to bed. His last fight was fought in that home.

Paul kneeled there, stroking his mother's hand.

“Don’t be poorly, mother — don’t be poorly!” he said  
again after time.

“It’s nothing, my boy,” she murmured.

At last he rose, fetched in a large piece of coal, and  
fed the fire. Then he cleared the room, put everything  
in order, laid the things for breakfast, and brought his  
mother’s candle.

“Can you go to bed, mother?”

“Yes, I’ll come.”

“Sleep with Annie, mother, not with him.”

“No. I’ll sleep in my own bed.”

“Don’t sleep with him, mother.”

“I’ll sleep in my own bed.”

She rose, and he turned out the gas, then followed her  
silently upstairs, carrying her candle. On the landing he  
stayed her close.

“Good-night, mother.”

“Good-night!” she said.

He pressed his face upon the pillow in a fury of  
despair. And yet, somewhere in his soul, he was at peace  
because he still loved his mother best. It was the bitter  
sense of resignation.

The efforts of his father to conciliate him next day  
were a great humiliation to him.

Everybody tried to forget the scene.

## CHAPTER IX

### DEFEAT OF MIRIAM

PAUL was dissatisfied with himself and with every thing. The deepest of his love belonged to his mother. When he felt he had hurt her, or wounded his love for her, he could not bear it. Now it was spring, and there was battle between him and Miriam. This year he had a good deal against her. She was vaguely aware of it. The old feeling that she was to be a sacrifice to this love, which she had had when she prayed, was mingled in all her emotions. She did not at the bottom believe she ever would have him. She did not believe in herself primarily: doubted whether she could ever be what he would demand of her. Certainly she never saw herself living happily through a lifetime with him. She saw tragedy, sorrow, and sacrifice ahead. And in sacrifice she was proud, in renunciation she was strong, for she did not trust herself to support everyday life. She was prepared for the big things and the deep things, like tragedy. It was the sufficiency of the small day-life she could not trust.

The Easter holidays began happily. Paul was his own frank self. Yet she felt it would go wrong. On the Sunday afternoon she stood at her bedroom window, looking across at the oak-trees of the wood, in whose branches a twilight was tangled, below the bright sky of the afternoon. Grey-green rosettes of honeysuckle leaves hung before the window, some already, she fancied, showing bud. It was spring, which she loved and dreaded.

Hearing the clack of the gate she stood in suspense. It was a bright grey day. Paul came into the yard with his bicycle, which glittered as he walked. Usually

g his bell and laughed towards the house. ~~hem~~ lav-  
walked with shut lips and cold, cruel bearing, tha-  
ething of a slouch and a sneer in it. She knew him  
by now, and could tell from that keen-looking, aloof  
ng body of his what was happening inside him.  
re was a cold correctness in the way he put his  
icle in its place, that made her heart sink.  
he came downstairs nervously. She was wearing a  
net blouse that she thought became her. It had a  
collar with a tiny ruff, reminding her of Mary,  
en of Scots, and making her, she thought, look won-  
fully a woman, and dignified. At twenty she was  
-breasted and luxuriously formed. Her face was still  
a soft rich mask, unchangeable. But her eyes, once  
ed, were wonderful. She was afraid of him. He would  
ice her new blouse.

Ie, being in a hard, ironical mood, was entertaining  
family to a description of a service given in the Primi-  
Methodist Chapel, conducted by one of the well-  
wn preachers of the sect. He sat at the head of the  
le, his mobile face, with the eyes that could be so  
utiful, shining with tenderness or dancing with laugh-  
now taking on one expression and then another, in  
ation of various people he was mocking. His mock-  
always hurt her; it was too near the reality. He  
too clever and cruel. She felt that when his eyes  
e like this, hard with mocking hate, he would spare  
her himself nor anybody else. But Mrs. Leivers was  
ing her eyes with laughter, and Mr. Leivers, just  
ke from his Sunday nap, was rubbing his head in  
sement. The three brothers sat with ruffled, sleepy  
earance in their shirt-sleeves, giving a guffaw from  
e to time. The whole family loved a "take-off" more  
n anything.

Ie took no notice of Miriam. Later, she saw him re-  
k her new blouse, saw that the artist approved, but  
on from him not a spark of warmth. She was ne-  
could hardly reach the teacups from the shelves

## *Sons and Lovers*

the men went out to milk, she ventured to address him personally.

"You were late," she said.

"Was I?" he answered.

There was silence for a while.

"Was it rough riding?" she asked.

"I didn't notice it."

She continued quickly to lay the table. When she had finished —

"Tea won't be for a few minutes. Will you come and look at the daffodils?" she said.

He rose without answering. They went out into the back garden under the budding damson-trees. The hills and the sky were clean and cold. Everything looked washed, rather hard. Miriam glanced at Paul. He was pale and impassive. It seemed cruel to her that his eyes and brows, which she loved, could look so hurting.

"Has the wind made you tired?" she asked. She detected an underneath feeling of weariness about him.

"No, I think not," he answered.

"It must be rough on the road — the wood moans so."

"You can see by the clouds it's a south-west wind; that helps me here."

"You see, I don't cycle, so I don't understand," she murmured.

"Is there need to cycle to know that?" he said.

She thought his sarcasms were unnecessary. They went forward in silence. Round the wild, tusocky lawn at the back of the house was a thorn hedge, under which daffodils were craning forward from among their sheaves of grey-green blades. The cheeks of the flowers were greenish with cold. But still some had burst, and their gold ruffled and glowed. Miriam went on her knees before one cluster, took a wild-looking daffodil between her hands, turned up its face of gold to her, and bowed down, caressing it with her mouth and cheeks and brow. He stood aside, with his hands in his pockets, watching her. One after another she turned up to him the faces of the flowers.

w, bursten flowers appealingly, fondling them lav-all the while.

Are n't they magnificent?" she murmured.

Magnificent! it's a bit thick — they're pretty!" He bowed again to her flowers at his censure of her self. He watched her crouching, sipping the flowers fervid kisses.

Why must you always be fondling things!" he said ably.

But I love to touch them," she replied, hurt.

Can you never like things without clutching them as you wanted to pull the heart out of them? Why don't have a bit more restraint, or reserve, or something?" He looked up at him full of pain, then continued to stroke her lips against a ruffled flower. Their it, as she smelled it, was so much kinder than he; it st made her cry.

You wheedle the soul out of things," he said. "I'd never wheedle — at any rate, I'd go straight."

He scarcely knew what he was saying. These things came from him mechanically. She looked at him. His eyes seemed one weapon, firm and hard against her.

You're always begging things to love you," he said, if you were a beggar for love. Even the flowers, you used to fawn on them — "

Rhythmicallly, Miriam was swaying and stroking the man with her mouth, inhaling the scent which ever after caused her shudder as it came to her nostrils.

You don't want to love — your eternal and abnormal longing is to be loved. You aren't positive, you're negative. You absorb, absorb, as if you must fill yourself up with love, because you've got a shortage somewhere."

He was stunned by his cruelty, and did not hear. He had not the faintest notion of what he was saying. It was as if his fretted, tortured soul, run hot by thwarted passion, jetted off these sayings like sparks from electric wires. She did not grasp anything he said. She only

crouched beneath his cruelty and his hatred of her. She never realized in a flash. Over everything she brooded and brooded.

After tea he stayed with Edgar and the brothers, taking no notice of Miriam. She, extremely unhappy on this looked-for holiday, waited for him. And at last he yielded and came to her. She was determined to track this mood of his to its origin. She counted it not much more than a mood.

"Shall we go through the wood a little way?" she asked him, knowing he never refused a direct request.

They went down to the warren. On the middle path they passed a trap, a narrow horseshoe hedge of small fir-boughs, baited with the guts of a rabbit. Paul glanced at it frowning. She caught his eye.

"Is n't it dreadful?" she asked.

"I don't know! Is it worse than a weasel with its teeth in a rabbit's throat? One weasel or many rabbits? One or the other must go!"

He was taking the bitterness of life badly. She was rather sorry for him.

"We will go back to the house," he said. "I don't want to walk out."

They went past the lilac-tree, whose bronze leaf-buds were coming unfastened. Just a fragment remained of the haystack, a monument squared and brown, like a pillar of stone. There was a little bed of hay from the last cutting.

"Let us sit here a minute," said Miriam.

He sat down against his will, resting his back against the hard wall of hay. They faced the amphitheatre of round hills that glowed with sunset, tiny white farms standing out, the meadows golden, the woods dark and yet luminous, tree-tops folded over tree-tops, distinct in the distance. The evening had cleared, and the east was tender with a magenta flush under which the land lay still and rich.

"Is n't it beautiful?" she pleaded.

But he only scowled. He would rather have had it  
ly just then.

At that moment a big bull-terrier came rushing up,  
en-mouthing, pranced his two paws on the youth's shoul-  
ers, licking his face. Paul drew back, laughing. Bill  
is a great relief to him. He pushed the dog aside, but  
came leaping back.

"Get out," said the lad, "or I'll dot thee one."

But the dog was not to be pushed away. So Paul had  
ittle battle with the creature, pitching poor Bill away  
om him, who, however, only floundered tumultuously  
ck again, wild with joy. The two fought together, the  
n laughing grudgingly, the dog grinning all over.  
riam watched them. There was something pathetic  
out the man. He wanted so badly to love, to be tender.  
e rough way he bowled the dog over was really loving.  
ll got up, panting with happiness, his brown eyes roll-  
g in his white face, and lumbered back again. He  
ored Paul. The lad frowned.

"Bill, I've had enough o' thee," he said.

But the dog only stood with two heavy paws, that  
ivered with love, upon his thigh, and flickered a red  
ngue at him. He drew back.

"No," he said — "no — I've had enough."

And in a minute the dog trotted off happily, to vary  
e fun.

He remained staring miserably across at the hills,  
ose still beauty he begrudged. He wanted to go and  
le with Edgar. Yet he had not the courage to leave  
riam.

"Why are you sad?" she asked humbly.

"I'm not sad; why should I be," he answered. "I'm  
y normal."

She wondered why he always claimed to be normal when  
was disagreeable.

"But what is the matter?" she pleaded, coaxing him  
thoroughly.

"Nothing!"

"Nay!" she murmured.

He picked up a stick and began to stab the with it.

"You'd far better not talk," he said.

"But I wish to know—" she replied.

He laughed resentfully.

"You always do," he said.

"It's not fair to me," she murmured.

He thrust, thrust, thrust at the ground with pointed stick, digging up little clods of earth as were in a fever of irritation. She gently and firmly her hand on his wrist.

"Don't!" she said. "Put it away."

He flung the stick into the currant-bushes, and I back. Now he was bottled up.

"What is it?" she pleaded softly.

He lay perfectly still, only his eyes alive, and full of torment.

"You know," he said at length, rather wear "you know — we'd better break off."

It was what she dreaded. Swiftly everything s to darken before her eyes.

"Why!" she murmured. "What has happened?

"Nothing has happened. We only realize whe are. It's no good —"

She waited in silence, sadly, patiently. It was no being impatient with him. At any rate, he would te now what ailed him.

"We agreed on friendship," he went on in a monotonous voice. "How often *have* we agreed friendship! And yet — it neither stops there, nor anywhere else."

He was silent again. She brooded. What di mean? He was so wearying. There was somethin would not yield. Yet she must be patient with him.

"I can only give friendship — it's all I'm capab — it's a flaw in my make-up. The thing overbal one side — I hate a toppling balance. Let us hav

'here was warmth of fury in his last phrases. He nt she loved him more than he her. Perhaps he d not love her. Perhaps she had not in herself that ch he wanted. It was the deepest motive of her soul, self-mistrust. It was so deep she dared neither realize acknowledge it. Perhaps she was sufficient. Like an uite subtle shame, it kept her always back. If it e so, she would do without him. She would never let elf want him. She would merely see.

But what has happened?" she said.

Nothing — it's all in myself — it only comes out now. We're always like this towards Easter."

He grovelled so helplessly, she pitied him. At least never floundered in such a pitiable way. After all, as he who was chiefly humiliated.

What do you want?" she asked him.

Why — I must n't come often — that's all. Why ld I monopolize you when I'm not — You see, I'm cient in something with regard to you — "

He was telling her he did not love her, and so ought to e her a chance with another man. How foolish and d and shamefully clumsy he was! What were other to her! What were men to her at all! But he, ah! loved his soul. Was he deficient in something? Per s he was.

But I don't understand," she said huskily. "Yester—"

he night was turning jangled and hateful to him as twilight faded. And she bowed under her suffering.

I know," he cried, "you never will! You'll never ve that I can't — can't physically, any more than n fly up like a skylark — "

What?" she murmured. Now she dreaded.

Love you."

He hated her bitterly at that moment because he madiffer. Love her! She knew he loved her. He real red to her. This about not loving her, physica

bodily, was a mere perversity on his part, because he knew she loved him. He was stupid like a child. He belonged to her. His soul wanted her. She guessed somebody had been influencing him. She felt upon him the hardness, the foreignness of another influence.

"What have they been saying at home?" she asked.

"It's not that," he answered.

And then she knew it was. She despised them for their commonness, his people. They did not know what things were really worth.

He and she talked very little more that night. After all he left her to cycle with Edgar.

He had come back to his mother. Hers was the strongest tie in his life. When he thought round, Miriam shrank away. There was a vague, unreal feel about her. And nobody else mattered. There was one place in the world that stood solid and did not melt into unreality; the place where his mother was. Everybody else could grow shadowy, almost non-existent to him, but she could not. It was as if the pivot and pole of his life, from which he could not escape, was his mother.

And in the same way she waited for him. In him was established her life now. After all, the life beyond offered very little to Mrs. Morel. She saw that our chance for *doing* is here, and doing counted with her. Paul was going to prove that she had been right; he was going to make a man whom nothing should shift off his feet; he was going to alter the face of the earth in some way which mattered. Wherever he went she felt her soul went with him. Whatever he did she felt her soul stood by him ready, as it were, to hand him his tools. She could not bear it when he was with Miriam. William was dead. She would fight to keep Paul.

And he came back to her. And in his soul was a feeling of the satisfaction of self-sacrifice because he was faithful to her. She loved him first; he loved her first. And yet it was not enough. His new young life, so strong and imperious, was urged towards something else.

le him mad with restlessness. She saw this, and grieved bitterly that Miriam had been a woman who could give up this new life of his, and leave her the roots. He fought against his mother almost as he fought against Miriam.

It was a week before he went again to Willey Farm. Miriam had suffered a great deal, and was afraid to see him again. Was she now to endure the ignominy of his abandoning her? That would only be superficial and temporary. He would come back. She held the keys of his soul. But meanwhile, how he would torture her in his battle against her. She shrank from it.

However, the Sunday after Easter he came to tea. Mrs. Leivers was glad to see him. She gathered something was fretting him, that he found things hard. He seemed to drift to her for comfort. And she was good to him. She did him that great kindness of treating him almost with reverence.

He met her with the young children in the front garden.

"I'm glad you've come," said the mother, looking at him with her great appealing brown eyes. "It is such a sunny day. I was just going down the fields for the first time this year."

He felt she would like him to come. That soothed him. They went, talking simply, he gentle and humble. He could have wept with gratitude that she was deferential to him. He was feeling humiliated.

At the bottom of the Mow Close they found a thrush's

"Shall I show you the eggs?" he said.

"Do!" replied Mrs. Leivers. "They seem such a sign of spring, and so hopeful."

He put aside the thorns, and took out the eggs, holding them in the palm of his hand.

"They are quite hot—I think we frightened her off," he said.

"My, poor thing!" said Mrs. Leivers.

Miriam could not help touching the eggs, and his hand which, it seemed to her, cradled them so well.

"Is n't it a strange warmth!" she murmured, to go near him.

"Blood heat," he answered.

She watched him putting them back, his body pressed against the hedge, his arm reaching slowly through the thorns, his hand folded carefully over the eggs. He was concentrated on the act. Seeing him so, she loved him; he seemed so simple and sufficient to himself. And she could not get to him.

After tea she stood hesitating at the bookshelf. He took "Tartarin de Tarascon." Again they sat on the bank of hay at the foot of the stack. He read a couple of pages, but without any heart for it. Again the dog came racing up to repeat the fun of the other day. He shoved his muzzle in the man's chest. Paul fingered his ear for a moment. Then he pushed him away.

"Go away, Bill," he said. "I don't want you."

Bill slunk off, and Miriam wondered and dreaded what was coming. There was a silence about the youth that made her still with apprehension. It was not his furies, but his quiet resolutions that she feared.

Turning his face a little to one side, so that she could not see him, he began, speaking slowly and painfully:

"Do you think — if I did n't come up so much — you might get to like somebody else — another man?"

So this was what he was still harping on.

"But I don't know any other men. Why do you ask?" she replied, in a low tone that should have been a reproach to him.

"Why," he blurted, "because they say I've no right to come up like this — without we mean to marry —"

Miriam was indignant at anybody's forcing the issues between them. She had been furious with her own father for suggesting to Paul, laughingly, that he knew who came so much.

"Who says?" she asked, wondering if her people had  
thing to do with it. They had not.

"Mother—and the others. They say at this rate  
rybody will consider me engaged, and I ought to  
isider myself so, because it's not fair to you. And  
we tried to find out—and I don't think I love you as  
man ought to love his wife. What do *you* think  
out it?"

Miriam bowed her head moodily. She was angry at  
ring this struggle. People should leave him and her  
ne.

"I don't know," she murmured.

"Do you think we love each other enough to marry?"  
asked definitely. It made her tremble.

"No," she answered truthfully. "I don't think so—  
're too young."

"I thought perhaps," he went on miserably, "that you,  
th your intensity in things, might have given me more  
than I could ever make up to you. And even now—  
you think it better—we'll be engaged."

Now Miriam wanted to cry. And she was angry, too.  
was always such a child for people to do as they  
ed with.

"No, I don't think so," she said firmly.

He pondered a minute.

"You see," he said, "with me—I don't think one  
son would ever monopolize me—be everything to me  
I think never."

This she did not consider.

"No," she murmured. Then, after a pause, she looked  
him and her dark eyes flashed.

"This is your mother," she said. "I know she never  
ed me."

"No, no, it is n't," he said hastily. "It was for your  
e she spoke this time. She only said, if I was going  
*I ought to consider myself engaged.*" There was  
ce. "And if I ask you to come down any tim  
won't stop away, will you?"

She did not answer. By this time she was very angry.  
“Well, what shall we do?” she said shortly.

“I suppose I’d better drop French. I was just beginning to get on with it. But I suppose I can go on alone.”

“I don’t see that we need,” he said. “I can give you a French lesson, surely.”

“Well — and there are Sunday nights. I shan’t be coming to chapel, because I enjoy it, and it’s all the social life I get. But you’ve no need to come home with me. I can go alone.”

“All right,” he answered, rather taken aback. “But if I ask Edgar, he’ll always come with us, and then there can say nothing.”

There was silence. After all, then, she would not be much. For all their talk down at his home there would not be much difference. She wished they would mind their own business.

“And you won’t think about it, and let it trouble you, will you?” he asked.

“Oh, no,” replied Miriam, without looking at him.

He was silent. She thought him unstable. He had fixity of purpose, no anchor of righteousness that held him.

“Because,” he continued, “a man gets across a bicycle — and goes to work — and does all sorts of things. But a woman broods.”

“No, I shan’t bother,” said Miriam. And she meant it.

It had gone rather chilly. They went indoors.

“How white Paul looks!” Mrs. Leivers exclaimed. “Miriam, you should n’t have let him sit out of doors. Do you think you’ve taken cold, Paul?”

“Oh no!” he laughed.

But he felt done up. It wore him out, the conflict with himself. Miriam pitied him now. But quite early, before nine o’clock, he rose to go.

“You’re not going home, are you?” asked Mrs. Leivers anxiously.

' he replied. "I said I'd be early." He was ward.

this *is* early," said Mr. Leivers.

I sat in the rocking-chair, and did not speak, ited, expecting her to rise and go with him to as usual for his bicycle. She remained as she was at a loss.

— good-night all!" he faltered.

oke her good-night along with all the others. e went past the window he looked in. She saw his brows knit slightly in a way that had become with him, his eyes dark with pain.

se and went to the doorway to wave good-bye to passed through the gate. He rode slowly under trees, feeling a cur and a miserable wretch. His ent tilting down the hills at random. He thought be a relief to break one's neck.

ays later he sent her up a book and a little note, er to read and be busy.

s time he gave all his friendship to Edgar. the family so much, he loved the farm so much; e dearest place on earth to him. His home was vable. It was his mother. But then he would n just as happy with his mother anywhere.

Willey Farm he loved passionately. He loved pokey kitchen, where men's boots tramped, and lept with one eye open for fear of being trodden

re the lamp hung over the table at night, and g was so silent. He loved Miriam's long, low with its atmosphere of romance, its flowers, its

s high rosewood piano. He loved the gardens buildings that stood with their scarlet roofs on

l edges of the fields, crept towards the wood as siness, the wild country scooping down a valley he uncultured hills of the other side. Only to

was an exhilaration and a joy to him. He loved vers, with her unworldliness and her quai

he loved Mr. Leivers, so warm and young

lovable; he loved Edgar, who lit up when he came, and the boys and the children and Bill — even the sow Circum and the Indian game-cock called Tippoo. All this beside Miriam. He could not give it up.

So he went as often, but he was usually with Edgar. Only all the family, including the father, joined in charades and games at evening. And later, Miriam drew them together, and they read "Macbeth" out of penny books, taking parts. It was great excitement. Miriam was glad, and Mrs. Leivers was glad, and Mr. Leivers enjoyed it. Then they all learned songs together from tonic sol-fa, singing in a circle round the fire. But now Paul was very rarely alone with Miriam. She waited. When she and Edgar and he walked home together from chapel or from the literary society in Bestwood, she knew his talk, so passionate and so unorthodox nowadays, was for her. She did envy Edgar, however, his cycling with Paul, his Friday nights, his days working in the fields. For her Friday nights and her French lessons were gone. She was nearly always alone, walking, pondering in the wood, reading, studying, dreaming, waiting. And he wrote to her frequently.

One Sunday evening they attained to their old rare harmony. Edgar had stayed to Communion — he wondered what it was like — with Mrs. Morel. So Paul came on alone with Miriam to his home. He was more or less under her spell again. As usual, they were discussing the sermon. He was setting now full sail towards Agnosticism, but such a religious Agnosticism that Miriam did not suffer so badly. They were at the Renan "Vie de Jésus" stage. Miriam was the threshing-floor upon which he threshed out all his beliefs. While he trampled his ideas upon her soul, the truth came out for him. She alone was his threshing-floor. She alone helped him towards realization. Almost impassive, she submitted to his argument and expounding. And somehow, because of her, he gradually realized where he was wrong. And what he realized, she realized. She felt he could not do without

They came to the silent house. He took the key out the scullery window, and they entered. All the time went on with his discussion. He lit the gas, mended the fire, and brought her some cakes from the pantry. He sat on the sofa, quietly, with a plate on her knee. He wore a large white hat with some pinkish flowers. It was a cheap hat, but he liked it. Her face beneath was still and pensive, golden-brown and ruddy. Always her ears were hid in her short curls. She watched him.

She liked him on Sundays. Then he wore a dark suit that showed the lithe movement of his body. There was a clean, clear-cut look about him. He went on with his talking to her. Suddenly he reached for a Bible. Miriam liked the way he reached up — so sharp, straight to the mark. He turned the pages quickly, and read her chapter of St. John. As he sat in the arm-chair reading, intent, his voice only thinking, she felt as if he were fitting her unconsciously as a man uses his tools at some work he is bent on. She loved it. And the wistfulness in his voice was like a reaching to something, and it was as if she were what he reached with. She sat back on the sofa away from him, and yet feeling herself the very instrument his hand grasped. It gave her great pleasure.

Then he began to falter and to get self-conscious. And when he came to the verse, "A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow because her hour is come," he missed out. Miriam had felt him growing uncomfortable. He shrank when the well-known words did not follow. He went on reading, but she did not hear. A grief and shame made her bend her head. Six months ago he would have read it simply. Now there was a scotch in his meaning with her. Now she felt there was really something hostile between them, something of which they were ashamed.

*She ate her cake mechanically. He tried to go on with argument, but could not get back the right tone.*

Soon Edgar came in. Mrs. Morel had gone to her friends'. The three set off to Willey Farm.

Miriam brooded over his split with her. There was something else he wanted. He could not be satisfied; he could give her no peace. There was between them now always a ground for strife. She wanted to prove him. She believed that his chief need in life was herself. If she could prove it, both to herself and to him, the rest might go; she could simply trust to the future.

So in May she asked him to come to Willey Farm and meet Mrs. Dawes. There was something he hankered after. She saw him, whenever they spoke of Clara Dawes, rouse and get slightly angry. He said he did not like her. Yet he was keen to know about her. Well, he should put himself to the test. She believed that the higher were in him desires for higher things, and desires for lower, and that the desire for the higher would conquer. At any rate, he should try. She forgot that the words "higher" and "lower" were arbitrary.

He was rather excited at the idea of meeting Clara at Willey Farm. Mrs. Dawes came for the day. Her heavy, dun-coloured hair was coiled on top of her head. She wore a white blouse and navy skirt, and somehow wherever she was, seemed to make things look paltry and insignificant. When she was in the room, the kitchen seemed too small and mean altogether. Miriam's beautiful twilighty parlour looked stiff and stupid. All the Leivers were eclipsed like candles. They found her rather hard to put up with. Yet she was perfectly amiable, but indifferent, and rather hard.

Paul did not come till afternoon. He was early, and he swung off his bicycle, Miriam saw him look round the house eagerly. He would be disappointed if the visitor had not come. Miriam went out to meet him, bowing her head because of the sunshine. Nasturtiums were coming out crimson under the cool green shade of their leaves. The girl stood, dark-haired, gazing at him.

Has n't Clara come?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Miriam in her musical tone. "She's ding."

He wheeled his bicycle into the barn. He had put on andsome tie, of which he was rather proud, and socks natch.

"She came this morning?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Miriam, as she walked at his side. ou said you'd bring me that letter from the man at erty's. Have you remembered?"

"Oh dash, no!" he said. "But nag at me till you it."

"I don't like to nag at you."

"Do it whether or not. And is she any more agree- e?" he continued.

"You know I always think she is quite agreeable."

He was silent. Evidently his eagerness to be early day had been the newcomer. Miriam already began to fer. They went together towards the house. He took clips off his trousers, but was too lazy to brush the t from his shoes, in spite of the socks and tie.

Clara sat in the cool parlour reading. He saw the e of her white neck, and the fine hair lifted from it. rose, looking at him indifferently. To shake hands lifted her arm straight, in a manner that seemed at e to keep him at a distance, and yet to fling something him. He noticed how her breasts swelled inside her use, and how her shoulder curved handsomely under thin muslin at the top of her arm.

"You have chosen a fine day," he said.

"It happens so," she said.

"Yes," he said; "I am glad."

She sat down, not thanking him for his politeness.

"What have you been doing all morning?" asked il of Miriam.

"Well, you see," said Miriam, coughing huskily ira only came with father — and so — she's not bee very long."

Clara sat leaning on the table, holding aloof. She noticed her hands were large, but well kept. And the skin on them seemed almost coarse, opaque, and with fine golden hairs. She did not mind if he observed her hands. She intended to scorn him. Her heavy head lay negligently on the table. Her mouth was closed as if she were offended, and she kept her face slightly averted.

"You were at Margaret Bonford's meeting the other evening," he said to her.

Miriam did not know this courteous Paul. She glanced at him.

"Yes," she said.

"Why," asked Miriam, "how do you know?"

"I went in for a few minutes before the train came," he answered.

Clara turned away again rather disdainfully.

"I think she's a lovable little woman," said Paul.

"Margaret Bonford!" exclaimed Clara. "She's a great deal cleverer than most men."

"Well, I didn't say she was n't," he said, deprecatingly. "She's lovable for all that."

"And of course, that is all that matters," said Clara, witheringly.

He rubbed his head, rather perplexed, rather annoyed.

"I suppose it matters more than her cleverness," said he; "which, after all, would never get her to heaven."

"It's not heaven she wants to get—it's her share on earth," retorted Clara. She spoke as if he were responsible for some deprivation which Miss Bonford suffered.

"Well," he said, "I thought she was warm, awfully nice—only too frail. I wished she was sitting comfortably in peace—"

"Darning her husband's stockings," said he, scathingly.

"I'm sure she wouldn't mind darning even my stockings," he said. "And I'm sure she'd do the

st as I would n't mind blacking her boots if she wanted to."

But Clara refused to answer this sally of his. He looked to Miriam for a little while. The other woman stood aloof.

"Well," he said, "I think I'll go and see Edgar. Is he on the land?"

"I believe," said Miriam, "he's gone for a load of coal. He should be back directly."

"Then," he said, "I'll go and meet him."

Miriam dared not propose anything for the three of them. He rose and left them.

On the top road, where the gorse was out, he saw Edgar walking lazily beside the mare, who nodded her slate-starred forehead as she dragged the clanking load of coal. The young farmer's face lighted up as he saw his friend. Edgar was good-looking, with dark, warm eyes. His clothes were old and rather disreputable, and he walked with considerable pride.

"Hello!" he said, seeing Paul bareheaded. "Where are you going?"

"Came to meet you. Can't stand 'Nevermore.'"

Edgar's teeth flashed in a laugh of amusement.

"Who is 'Nevermore'?" he asked.

"The lady — Mrs. Dawes — it ought to be Mrs. Theaven that quothed 'Nevermore.'"

Edgar laughed with glee.

"Don't you like her?" he asked.

"Not a fat lot," said Paul. "Why, do you?"

"No!" The answer came with a deep ring of conviction. "No!" Edgar pursed up his lips. "I can't say she's much in my line." He mused a little. Then: But why do you call her 'Nevermore'?" he asked.

"Well," said Paul, "if she looks at a man she says lightly 'Nevermore,' and if she looks at herself in the looking-glass she says disdainfully 'Nevermore,' and if she thinks back she says it in disgust, and if she looks forward she says it cynically."

Edgar considered this speech, failed to make much of it, and said, laughing:

"You think she's a man-hater?"

"She thinks she is," replied Paul.

"But you don't think so?"

"No," replied Paul.

"Wasn't she nice with you, then?"

"Could you imagine her *nice* with anybody?" asked the young man.

Edgar laughed. Together they unloaded the coal in the yard. Paul was rather self-conscious, because he knew Clara could see if she looked out of the window. She didn't look.

On Saturday afternoons the horses were brushed down and groomed. Paul and Edgar worked together, sneezing with the dust that came from the pelts of Jimmy and Flower.

"Do you know a new song to teach me?" said Edgar.

He continued to work all the time. The back of his neck was sun-red when he bent down, and his fingers that held the brush were thick. Paul watched him sometimes.

"'Mary Morrison'?" suggested the younger.

Edgar agreed. He had a good tenor voice, and loved to learn all the songs his friend could teach him, that he could sing whilst he was carting. Paul had very indifferent baritone voice, but a good ear. However, he sang softly, for fear of Clara. Edgar repeated the line in a clear tenor. At times they both broke off to sneeze, and first one, then the other, abused his horse.

Miriam was impatient of men. It took so little to amuse them — even Paul. She thought it anomalous in him that he could be so thoroughly absorbed in triviality.

*It was teatime when they had finished.*

"What song was that?" asked Miriam.

*Edgar told her. The conversation turned to singing.*

"We have such jolly times," Miriam said to Cl

Mrs. Dawes ate her meal in a slow, dignified way. Whenever the men were present she grew distant.

"Do you like singing?" Miriam asked her.

"If it is good," she said.

Paul, of course, coloured.

"You mean if it is high-class and trained?" he said.

"I think a voice needs training before the singing is thing," she said.

"You might as well insist on having people's voices ined before you allowed them to talk," he replied. "Really, people sing for their own pleasure, as a rule."

"And it may be for other people's discomfort."

"Then the other people should have flaps to their s," he replied.

The boys laughed. There was silence. He flushed  
ply, and ate in silence.

After tea, when all the men had gone but Paul, Mrs. Leivers said to Clara:

"And you find life happier now?"

"Infinitely."

"And you are satisfied?"

"So long as I can be free and independent."

"And you don't miss anything in your life?" asked Mrs. Leivers gently.

"I've put all that behind me."

Paul had been feeling uncomfortable during this discourse. He got up.

"You'll find you're always tumbling over the things you've put behind you," he said. Then he took his arture to the cowsheds. He felt he had been witty, his manly pride was high. He whistled as he went n the brick track.

Miriam came for him a little later to know if he would go with Clara and her for a walk. They set off down to Willey Mill Farm. As they were going beside the brook, the Willey Water side, looking through the brake at the edge of the wood, where pink campions glowed under sunbeams, they saw, beyond the tree-trunks and

thin hazel bushes, a man leading a great bay horse through the gullies. The big red beast seemed to dance romantically through that dimness of green hazel drift, away there where the air was shadowy, as if it were in the past, among the fading bluebells that might have bloomed for Deidre of Iseult.

The three stood charmed.

"What a treat to be a knight," he said, "and to have a pavilion here."

"And to have us shut up safely?" replied Clara.

"Yes," he answered, "singing with your maids at your broidery. I would carry your banner of white and green and heliotrope. I would have 'W.S.P.U.' emblazoned on my shield, beneath a woman rampant."

"I have no doubt," said Clara, "that you would much rather fight for a woman than let her fight for herself."

"I would. When she fights for herself she seems like a dog before a looking-glass, gone into a mad fury with its own shadow."

"And *you* are the looking-glass?" she asked, with a curl of the lip.

"Or the shadow," he replied.

"I am afraid," she said, "that you are too clever."

"Well, I leave it to you to be *good*," he retorted, laughing. "Be good, sweet maid, and just let *me* be clever."

But Clara wearied of his flippancy. Suddenly, looking at her, he saw that the upward lifting of her face was misery and not scorn. His heart grew tender for everybody. He turned and was gentle with Miriam, whom he had neglected till then.

At the wood's edge they met Limb, a thin, swarthy man of forty, tenant of Strelley Mill, which he ran as a cattle raising farm. He held the halter of the powerful stallion indifferently, as if he were tired. The three stood to let him pass over the stepping-stones of the first brook. Paul admired that so large an animal should walk

h springy toes, with an endless excess of vigour. Limb led up before them.

'Tell your father, Miss Leivers,' he said, in a peculiar ing voice, "that his young beas'es 'as broke that tom fence three days an' runnin'."

'Which?' asked Miriam, tremulous.

The great horse breathed heavily, shifting round its flanks, and looking suspiciously with its wonderful eyes upwards from under its lowered head and falling ie.

Come along a bit," replied Limb, "an' I'll show ."

The man and the stallion went forward. It danced ways, shaking its white fetlocks and looking fright-  
fle, as it felt itself in the brook.

No hanky-pankyin'," said the man affectionately to beast.

t went up the bank in little leaps, then splashed ly through the second brook. Clara, walking with a d of sulky abandon, watched it half-fascinated, half-temptuous. Limb stopped and pointed to the fence le some willows.

'There, you see where they got through," he said. ly man 's druv 'em back three times."

'Yes," answered Miriam, colouring as if she were at lt.

'Are you comin' in?" asked the man.

'No, thanks; but we should like to go by the pond."

'Well, just as you 've a mind," he said.

The horse gave little whinnies of pleasure at being near home.

'He is glad to be back," said Clara, who was inter-  
d in the creature.

'Yes — 'e 's been a tidy step to-day."

They went through the gate, and saw approaching n from the big farmhouse a smallish, dark, excitable-  
ing woman of about thirty-five. Her hair w  
ied with grey, her dark eyes looked wild.

walked with her hands behind her back. Her brother went forward. As it saw her, the big bay stallion whinnied again. She came up excitedly.

"Are you home again, my boy!" she said tenderly to the horse, not to the man. The great beast shifted round to her, ducking his head. She smuggled into his mouth the wrinkled yellow apple she had been hiding behind her back, then she kissed him near the eyes. He gave a big sigh of pleasure. She held his head in her arms against her breast.

"Is n't he splendid!" said Miriam to her.

Miss Limb looked up. Her dark eyes glanced straight at Paul.

"Oh, good-evening, Miss Leivers," she said. "It's ages since you've been down."

Miriam introduced her friends.

"Your horse *is* a fine fellow!" said Clara.

"Is n't he!" Again she kissed him. "As loving as any man!"

"More loving than most men, I should think," replied Clara.

"He's a nice boy!" cried the woman, again embracing the horse.

Clara, fascinated by the big beast, went up to stroke his neck.

"He's quite gentle," said Miss Limb. "Don't you think big fellows are?"

"He's a beauty!" replied Clara.

She wanted to look in his eyes. She wanted him to look at her.

"It's a pity he can't talk," she said.

"Oh, but he can — all but," replied the other woman.

Then her brother moved on with the horse.

"Are you coming in? Do come in, Mr. — I didn't catch it."

"Morel," said Miriam. "No, we won't come in, but we should like to go by the mill-pond."

"Yes — yes, do. Do you fish, Mr. Morel?"

No," said Paul.

Because if you do you might come and fish any  
," said Miss Limb. "We scarcely see a soul from  
x's end to week's end. I should be thankful."

What fish are there in the pond?" he asked.

They went through the front garden, over the sluice,  
up the steep bank to the pond, which lay in shadow,  
its two wooded islets. Paul walked with Miss  
b.

I should n't mind swimming here," he said.

Do," she replied. "Come when you like. My  
her will be awfully pleased to talk with you. He is  
quiet, because there is no one to talk to. Do come  
swim."

Clara came up.

It's a fine depth," she said, "and so clear."

Yes," said Miss Limb.

Do you swim?" said Paul. "Miss Limb was just  
ng we could come when we liked."

Of course there's the farm-hands," said Miss Limb.  
hey talked a few moments, then went on up the wild  
leaving the lonely, haggard-eyed woman on the  
e.

he hillside was all ripe with sunshine. It was wild  
tussocky, given over to rabbits. The three walked  
ilence. Then:

She makes me feel uncomfortable," said Paul.

You mean Miss Limb?" asked Miriam. "Yes."

What's a matter with her? Is she going dotty with  
g too lonely?"

Yes," said Miriam. "It's not the right sort of life  
her. I think it's cruel to bury her there. I really  
ht to go and see her more. But — she upsets me."

She makes me feel sorry for her — yes, and she  
iers me," he said.

I suppose," blurted Clara suddenly, "she wants a

e other two were silent for a few moments.

"But it's the loneliness sends her cracked," said Paul.

Clara did not answer, but strode on uphill. She was walking with her head hanging, her legs swinging as she kicked through the dead thistles and the tussocky grass, her arms hanging loose. Rather than walking, her hand-some body seemed to be blundering up the hill. A heavy wave went over Paul. He was curious about her. Perhaps life had been cruel to her. He forgot Miriam who was walking beside him talking to him. She glanced at him, finding he did not answer her. His eyes were fixed ahead on Clara.

"Do you still think she is disagreeable?" she asked.

He did not notice that the question was sudden. It ran with his thoughts.

"Something's the matter with her," he said.

"Yes," answered Miriam.

They found at the top of the hill a hidden wild field, two sides of which were backed by the wood, the other sides by high loose hedges of hawthorn and elder-bushes. Between these overgrown bushes were gaps that the cattle might have walked through had there been any cattle now. There the turf was smooth as velveteen, padded and holed by the rabbits. The field itself was coarse, and crowded with tall, big cowslips that had never been cut. Clusters of strong flowers rose everywhere above the coarse tufts of bent. It was like a roadstead crowded with tall, fairy shipping.

"Ah!" cried Miriam, and she looked at Paul, her dark eyes dilating. He smiled. Together they enjoyed the field of flowers. Clara, a little way off, was looking at the cowslips disconsolately. Paul and Miriam stayed close together, talking in subdued tones. He kneeled on one knee, quickly gathering the best blossoms, moving from tuft to tuft restlessly, talking softly all the time. Miriam plucked the flowers lovingly, lingering over them. He always seemed to her too quick and almost scientific. Yet his bunches had a natural beauty more than he

oved them, but as if they were his and he had a right hem. She had more reverence for them: they held e thing she had not.

he flowers were very fresh and sweet. He wanted to k them. As he gathered them, he ate the little yellow ipets. Clara was still wandering about disconsolately. ig towards her, he said:

Why don't you get some?"

I don't believe in it. They look better growing."

But you'd like some?"

They want to be left."

I don't believe they do."

I don't want the corpses of flowers about me," she

That's a stiff, artificial notion," he said. "They t die any quicker in water than on their roots. And les, they *look* nice in a bowl — they look jolly. And only call a thing a corpse because it looks corpse-

"Whether it is one or not?" she argued.

It is n't one to me. A dead flower is n't a corpse of wer."

ara now ignored him.

And even so — what right have you to pull them?" asked.

Because I like them, and want them — and there's ty of them."

And that is sufficient?"

Yes. Why not? I'm sure they'd smell nice in your i in Nottingham."

And I should have the pleasure of watching them

But then — it does not matter if they do die."

hereupon he left her, and went stooping over the ps of tangled flowers which thickly sprinkled the like pale, luminous foam-clots. Miriam had come

*Clara was kneeling, breathing some scent from th*

"I think," said Miriam, "if you treat them with reverence you don't do them any harm. It is the spirit you pluck them in that matters."

"Yes," he said. "But no, you get 'em because you want 'em, and that's all." He held out his bunch.

Miriam was silent. He picked some more.

"Look at these!" he continued; "sturdy and lusty like little trees and like boys with fat legs."

Clara's hat lay on the grass not far off. She was kneeling, bending forward still to smell the flowers. Her neck gave him a sharp pang, such a beautiful thing, yet not proud of itself just now. Her breasts swung slightly in her blouse. The arching curve of her back was beautiful and strong; she wore no stays. Suddenly, without knowing, he was scattering a handful of cowslips over her hair and neck, saying:

"Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust,  
If the Lord won't have you the devil must."

The chill flowers fell on her neck. She looked up at him with almost pitiful, scared grey eyes, wondering what he was doing. Flowers fell on her face, and she shut her eyes.

Suddenly, standing there above her, he felt awkward.

"I thought you wanted a funeral," he said, ill at ease.

Clara laughed strangely, and rose, picking the cowslips from her hair. She took up her hat and pinned it on. One flower had remained tangled in her hair. He saw, but would not tell her. He gathered up the flowers he had sprinkled over her.

At the edge of the wood the bluebells had flowed over into the field and stood there like flood-water. But they were fading now. Clara strayed up to them. He wandered after her. The bluebells pleased him.

"Look how they've come out of the wood!" he said.

Then she turned with a flash of warmth and gratitude.

"Yes," she smiled.

His blood beat up.

"It makes me think of the wild men of the woods, how trifled they would be when they got breast to breast th the open space."

"Do you think they were?" she asked.

"I wonder which was more frightened among old ibes — those bursting out of their darkness of woods on all the space of light, or those from the open tip- eing into the forests."

"I should think the second," she answered.

"Yes, you *do* feel like one of the open space sort, try- g to force yourself into the dark, don't you?"

"How should I know?" she answered queerly.

The conversation ended there.

The evening was deepening over the earth. Already e valley was full of shadow. One tiny square of light ood opposite at Crossleigh Bank Farm. Brightness s swimming on the tops of the hills. Miriam came up wly, her face in her big, loose bunch of flowers, walking kle-deep through the scattered froth of the cowslips. yond her the trees were coming into shape, all shadow.

"Shall we go?" she asked.

And the three turned away. They were all silent. ing down the path they could see the light of home ht across, and on the ridge of the hill a thin dark tline with little lights, where the colliery village touched : sky.

"It has been nice, has n't it?" he asked.

Miriam murmured assent. Clara was silent.

"Don't you think so?" he persisted.

But she walked with her head up, and still did not swer. He could tell by the way she moved, as if she l n't care, that she suffered.

At this time Paul took his mother to Lincoln. She s bright and enthusiastic as ever, but as he sat oppo- e her in the railway carriage, she seemed to look frail had a momentary sensation as if she were slippin y from him. Then he wanted to get hold of h

to fasten her, almost to chain her. He felt he must keep hold of her with his hand.

They drew near to the city. Both were at the window looking for the cathedral.

"There she is, mother!" he cried.

They saw the great cathedral lying couchant above the plain.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "So she is!"

He looked at his mother. Her blue eyes were watching the cathedral quietly. She seemed again to be beyond him. Something in the eternal repose of the uplifted cathedral, blue and noble against the sky, was reflected in her, something of the fatality. What was, *was*. With all his young will he could not alter it. He saw her face, the skin still fresh and pink and downy, but crow's-feet near her eyes, her eyelids steady, sinking a little, her mouth always closed with disillusion; and there was on her the same eternal look, as if she knew fate at last. He beat against it with all the strength of his soul.

"Look, mother, how big she is above the town! Think, there are streets and streets below her! She looks bigger than the city altogether."

"So she does!" exclaimed his mother, breaking bright into life again. But he had seen her sitting, looking steady out of the window at the cathedral, her face and eyes fixed, reflecting the relentlessness of life. And the crow's-feet near her eyes, and her mouth shut so hard, made him feel he would go mad.

They ate a meal that she considered wildly extravagant.

"Don't imagine I like it," she said, as she ate her cutlet. "I don't like it, I really don't! Just think of your money wasted!"

"You never mind my money," he said. "You forget I'm a fellow taking his girl for an outing."

And he bought her some blue violets.

"Stop it at once, sir!" she commanded. "How can I do it?"

"You've got nothing to do. Stand still!"

And in the middle of High Street he stuck the flowers  
her coat.

"An old thing like me!" she said, sniffing.

"You see," he said, "I want people to think we're  
ul swells. So look ikey."

"I'll jowl your head," she laughed.

"Strut!" he commanded. "Be a fantail pigeon."

It took him an hour to get her through the street. She  
od above Glory Hole, she stood before Stone Bow,  
stood everywhere, and exclaimed.

A man came up, took off his hat, and bowed to her.

"Can I show you the town, madam?"

"No, thank you," she answered. "I've got my son."  
Then Paul was cross with her for not answering with  
re dignity.

"You go away with you!" she exclaimed. "Ha!  
t's the Jew's House. Now, do you remember that  
ure, Paul — ?"

But she could scarcely climb the cathedral hill. He  
not notice. Then suddenly he found her unable to  
ak. He took her into a little public-house, where she  
ted.

"It's nothing," she said. "My heart is only a bit  
; one must expect it."

He did not answer, but looked at her. Again his heart  
s crushed in a hot grip. He wanted to cry, he wanted  
smash things in fury.

They set off again, pace by pace, so slowly. And  
ry step seemed like a weight on his chest. He felt as  
is heart would burst. At last they came to the top.  
stood enchanted, looking at the castle gate, looking  
the cathedral front. She had quite forgotten herself.

"Now *this* is better than I thought it could be!" she  
d.

But he hated it. Everywhere he followed her, brood-

They sat together in the cathedral. They attended  
ittle service in the choir. She was timid.

"I suppose it is open to anybody?" she asked him

"Yes," he replied. "Do you think they'd have the damned cheek to send us away."

"Well, I'm sure," she exclaimed, "they would if they heard your language."

Her face seemed to shine again with joy and peace during the service. And all the time he was wanting to rage and smash things and cry.

Afterwards, when they were leaning over the wall, looking at the town below, he blurted suddenly:

"Why can't a man have a *young* mother? What is she old for?"

"Well," his mother laughed, "she can scarcely help it."

"And why was n't I the oldest son? Look — they say the young ones have the advantage — but look, *they* had the young mother. You should have had me for your eldest son."

"I did n't arrange it," she remonstrated. "Come to consider, you're as much to blame as me."

He turned on her, white, his eyes furious.

"What are you old for!" he said, mad with his impotence. "Why can't you walk? Why can't you come with me to places?"

"At one time," she replied, "I could have run up that hill a good deal better than you."

"What's the good of that to *me*?" he cried, hitting his fist on the wall. Then he became plaintive. "It's too bad of you to be ill, Little, it is —"

"Ill!" she cried. "I'm a bit old, and you'll have to put up with it, that's all."

They were quiet. But it was as much as they could bear. They got jolly again over tea. As they sat by Brayford, watching the boats, he told her about Clara. His mother asked him innumerable questions.

"Then who does she live with?"

"With her mother, on Bluebell Hill."

"And have they enough to keep them?"

"I don't think so. I think they do lace work."

"And wherein lies her charm, my boy?"

"I don't know that she's charming, mother. But he's nice. And she seems straight, you know—not a bit deep, not a bit."

"But she's a good deal older than you."

"She's thirty, I'm going of twenty-three."

"You haven't told me what you like her for."

"Because I don't know—a sort of defiant way she's got—a sort of angry way."

Mrs. Morel considered. She would have been glad now for her son to fall in love with some woman who would—she did not know what. But he fretted so, got so furious suddenly, and again was melancholic. She wished he knew some nice woman—She did not know what she wished, but left it vague. At any rate she was not hostile to the idea of Clara.

Annie, too, was getting married. Leonard had gone away to work in Birmingham. One week-end when he was home she had said to him:

"You don't look very well, my lad."

"I dunno," he said. "I feel anyhow or nohow, ma."

He called her "ma" already in his boyish fashion.

"Are you sure they're good lodgings?" she asked.

"Yes—yes. Only—it's a winder when you have to pour your own tea out—an' nobody to grouse if you team it in your saucer and sup it up. It somehow takes a' the taste out of it."

Mrs. Morel laughed.

"And so it knocks you up?" she said.

"I dunno. I want to get married," he blurted, twisting his fingers and looking down at his boots. There was a silence.

"But," she exclaimed, "I thought you said you'd wait another year."

"Yes, I did say so," he replied stubbornly.

Again she considered.

"And you know," she said, "Annie's a bit of a s

"Ay, they all say that, my lad. You've not met the one yet. Only wait a year or two."

"But I shan't marry, mother. I shall live with you and we'll have a servant."

"Ay, my lad, it's easy to talk. We'll see when the time comes."

"What time? I'm nearly twenty-three."

"Yes, you're not one that would marry young. But in three years' time — "

"I shall be with you just the same."

"We'll see, my boy, we'll see."

"But you don't want me to marry?"

"I should n't like to think of you going through your life without anybody to care for you and do — no."

"And you think I ought to marry?"

"Sooner or later every man ought."

"But you'd rather it were later."

"It would be hard — and very hard. It's as they say:

"A son's my son till he takes him a wife.

But my daughter's my daughter — a wnoie of her life."

"And you think I'd let a wife take me from you?"

"Well, you would n't ask her to marry your mother as well as you," Mrs. Morel smiled.

"She could do what she liked; she would n't have to interfere."

"She would n't — till she'd got you — and then you'd see."

"I never will see. I'll never marry while I've got you — I won't."

"But I should n't like to leave you with nobody, my boy," she cried.

"You're not going to leave me. What are you? Fifty-three! I'll give you till seventy-five. There you are, I'm fat and forty-four. Then I'll marry a staid body. See!"

*His mother sat and laughed.*

"Go to bed," she said — "go to bed."

"And we'll have a pretty house, you and me, and a vant, and it'll be just all right. I'll perhaps be n with my painting."

"Will you go to bed!"

"And then you'll have a pony-carriage. See your — a little Queen Victoria trotting round."

"I tell you to go to bed," she laughed.

He kissed her and went. His plans for the future were ays the same.

Mrs. Morel sat brooding — about her daughter, about al, about Arthur. She fretted at losing Annie. The nily was very closely bound. And she felt she *must* now, to be with her children. Life was so rich for . Paul wanted her, and so did Arthur. Arthur never w how deeply he loved her. He was a creature of the ment. Never yet had he been forced to realize himself. e army had disciplined his body, but not his soul. He in perfect health and very handsome. His dark, orous hair sat close to his smallish head. There was iething childish about his nose, something almost girl- about his dark blue eyes. But he had the full red mouth of a man under his brown moustache, and his jaw strong. It was his father's mouth; it was the nose eyes of her own mother's people — good-looking, k-principled folk. Mrs. Morel was anxious about him. ce he had really run the rig he was safe. But how would he go?

The army had not really done him any good. He re- ted bitterly the authority of the petty officers. He ed having to obey as if he were an animal. But he too much sense to kick. So he turned his attention getting the best out of it. He could sing, he was a n-companion. Often he got into scrapes, but they e the manly scrapes that are easily condoned. So made a good time out of it, whilst his self-respect was ppression. He trusted to his good looks and han figure, his refinement, his decent education to

him most of what he wanted, and he was not disappointed. Yet he was restless. Something seemed to gnaw him inside. He was never still, he was never alone. With mother he was rather humble. Paul he admired and loved and despised slightly. And Paul admired and loved and despised him slightly.

Mrs. Morel had had a few pounds left to her by her father, and she decided to buy her son out of the army. He was wild with joy. Now he was like a lad taking a holiday.

He had always been fond of Beatrice Wyld, and during his furlough he picked up with her again. She was stronger and better in health. The two often went for walks together, Arthur taking her arm in soldier's fashion, rather stiffly. And she came to play the piano while he sang. Then Arthur would unhook his tunic collar. He grew flushed, his eyes were bright, he sang in a manly tenor. Afterwards they sat together on the sofa. She seemed to flaunt his body: she was aware of him so well, the strong chest, the sides, the thighs in their close-fitting trousers.

He liked to lapse into the dialect when he talked to her. She would sometimes smoke with him. Occasionally she would only take a few whiffs of his cigarette.

"Nay," he said to her one evening, when she reached for his cigarette. "Nay, tha doesn't. I'll gi'e thee a smoke kiss if ter's a mind."

"I wanted a whiff, no kiss at all," she answered.

"Well, an' tha s'lt ha'e a whiff," he said, "along wi' a kiss."

"I want a draw at thy fag," she cried, snatching the cigarette between his lips.

He was sitting with his shoulder touching her. She was small and quick as lightning. He just escaped.

"I'll gi'e thee a smoke kiss," he said.

"Tha'rt a knivey nuisance, Arty Morel," she was sitting back.

"Ha'e a smoke kiss?"

The soldier leaned forward to her, smiling. His face as near hers.

"Shonna!" she replied, turning away her head. He took a draw at his cigarette, and pursed up his mouth, and put his lips close to her. His dark-brown capped moustache stood out like a brush. She looked at the puckered crimson lips, then suddenly snatched the cigarette from his fingers and darted away. He, leaping after her, seized the comb from her back hair. She turned, threw the cigarette at him. He picked it up, put it in his mouth, and sat down.

"Nuisance!" she cried. "Give me my comb!"

She was afraid that her hair, specially done for him, would come down. She stood with her hands to her head. He hid the comb between his knees.

"I've non got it," he said.

The cigarette trembled between his lips with laughter he spoke.

"Liar!" she said.

"'S true as I'm here!" he laughed, showing his hands. "You brazen imp!" she exclaimed, rushing and scuffling for the comb, which he had under his knees. As she wrestled with him, pulling at his smooth, tight-covered knees, he laughed till he lay back on the sofa shaking with laughter. The cigarette fell from his mouth, almost going his throat. Under his delicate tan the blood shed up, and he laughed till his blue eyes were blinded, the throat swollen almost to choking. Then he sat up. Beatrice was putting in her comb.

"Tha tickled me, Beat," he said thickly.

Like a flash her small white hand went out and smacked his face. He started up, glaring at her. They stared at each other. Slowly the flush mounted her cheek, she dropped her eyes, then her head. He sat down sulkily. He went into the scullery to adjust her hair. In private ere she shed a few tears, she did not know what for. When she returned she was pursed up close. But only a film over her fire. He, with ruffled hair,

"No!" she flashed, turning to Edgar. "I touch, did I? Was n't I clear?"

"I could n't say," laughed Edgar.

None of them could say.

"But you touched," said Paul. "You 're beat."

"I did *not* touch!" she cried.

"As plain as anything," said Paul.

"Box his ears for me!" she cried to Edgar.

"Nay," Edgar laughed. "I dare n't. You must yourself."

"And nothing can alter the fact that you tou  
laughed Paul.

She was furious with him. Her little triumph  
these lads and men was gone. She had forgotten  
in the game. Now he was to humble her.

"I think you are despicable!" she said.

And again he laughed, in a way that tortured M

"And I *knew* you could n't jump that heap," he t

She turned her back on him. Yet everybody cou  
that the only person she listened to, or was conscio  
was he, and he of her. It pleased the men to se  
battle between them. But Miriam was tortured.

Paul could choose the lesser in place of the highe  
saw. He could be unfaithful to himself, unfaithful  
real, deep Paul Morel. There was a danger of h  
coming frivolous, of his running after his satisfac  
like any Arthur, or like his father. It made Miriam  
to think that he should throw away his soul for  
flippant traffic of triviality with Clara. She walk  
bitterness and silence, while the other two rallied  
other, and Paul sported.

And afterwards, he would not own it, but he was r  
ashamed of himself, and prostrated himself before M  
Then again he rebelled.

"It's not religious to be religious," he said.  
reckon a crow is religious when it sails across the  
But it only does it because it feels itself carried by  
it's going, not because it thinks it is being etern

But Miriam knew that one should be religious in everything, have God, whatever God might be, present in everything.

"I don't believe God knows such a lot about Himself," cried. "God does n't *know* things, He *is* things. And I'm sure He's not soulful."

And then it seemed to her that Paul was arguing God to his own side, because he wanted his own way and own pleasure. There was a long battle between him and her. He was utterly unfaithful to her even in her presence; then he was ashamed, then repentant; then he hated her, and went off again. Those were the ever-recurring conditions.

She fretted him to the bottom of his soul. There she remained — sad, pensive, a worshipper. And he caused her sorrow. Half the time he grieved for her, half the time he hated her. She was his conscience; and he felt, somehow, he had got a conscience that was too much for him. He could not leave her, because in one way she did hold the best of him. He could not stay with her because she did not take the rest of him, which was three-quarters. He chafed himself into rawness over her.

When she was twenty-one he wrote her a letter which could only have been written to her.

"May I speak of our old, worn love, this last time. It too, is changing, is it not? Say, has not the body that love died, and left you its invulnerable soul? You know, I can give you a spirit love, I have given it you this long, long time; but not embodied passion. See, you are a nun. I have given you what I would give a holy man — as a mystic monk to a mystic nun. Surely you seem it best. Yet you regret — no, have regretted — another. In all our relations no body enters. I do not look to you through the senses — rather through the spirit. That is why we cannot love in the common sense. This is not an everyday affection. As yet we are mortal to live side by side with one another would be dre-

ful, for somehow with you I cannot long be trivial, and you know, to be always beyond this mortal state would be to lose it. If people marry, they must live together as affectionate humans, who may be commonplace with each other without feeling awkward—not as two souls. So I feel it.

"Ought I to send this letter—I doubt it. But there—it is best to understand. Au revoir."

Miriam read this letter twice, after which she sealed it up. A year later she broke the seal to show her mother the letter.

"You are a nun—you are a nun." The words went into her heart again and again. Nothing he ever had said had gone into her so deeply, fixedly, like a mortal wound.

She answered two days after the party.

"Our intimacy would have been all-beautiful but for one little mistake," she quoted. "Was the mistake mine?"

Almost immediately he replied to her from Nottingham, sending her at the same time a little "Omar Khayyám."

"I am glad you answered; you are so calm and natural. You put me to shame. What a ranter I am! We are often out of sympathy. But in fundamentals we must always be together, I think.

"I must thank you for your sympathy with my painting and drawing. Many a sketch is dedicated to you. I do look forward to your criticisms, which, to my shame and glory, are always grand appreciations. It is a lovely joke, that. Au revoir."

This was the end of the first phase of Paul's love affair. He was now about twenty-three years old, and though still virgin, the sex instinct that Miriam had over-refined for so long now grew particularly strong. Often, as he talked to Clara Dawes, came that thickening and quickening of his blood, that peculiar con-

the breast, as if something were alive there, a  
f or a new centre of consciousness, warning him  
oner or later he would have to ask one woman or  
. But he belonged to Miriam. Of that she was  
lly sure that he allowed her right.

## CHAPTER X

CLARA

WHEN he was twenty-three years old Paul sent in a landscape to the winter exhibition at Nottingham Castle. Miss Jordan had taken a good deal of interest in him, had invited him to her house, where he met other artists. He was beginning to grow ambitious.

One morning the postman came just as he was washing in the scullery. Suddenly he heard a wild noise from his mother. Rushing into the kitchen, he found her standing on the hearthrug wildly waving a letter and crying "Hurrah!" as if she had gone mad. He was shocked and frightened.

"Why, mother!" he exclaimed.

She flew to him, flung her arms round him for a moment, then waved the letter, crying:

"Hurrah, my boy! I knew we should do it!"

He was afraid of her — the small, severe woman with greying hair suddenly bursting out in such frenzy. The postman came running back, afraid something had happened. They saw his tipped cap over the short curtain. Mrs. Morel rushed to the door.

"His picture's got first prize, Fred," she cried, "and is sold for twenty guineas."

"My word, that's something like!" said the young postman, whom they had known all his life.

"And Major Moreton has bought it!" she cried.

"It looks like meanin' something, that does, Mr. Morel," said the postman, his blue eyes bright. He was glad to have brought such a lucky letter. Mrs. Morel went indoors and sat down, trembling. Paul was afraid lest she might have misread the letter, and might be

ted after all. He scrutinized it once, twice. Yes, he  
ne convinced it was true. Then he sat down, his  
; beating with joy.

Mother!" he exclaimed.

Did n't I *say* we should do it!" she said, pretending  
was not crying.

I took the kettle off the fire and mashed the tea.  
You did n't think, mother — " he began tentatively.  
No, my son — not so much — but I expected a good  
,

But not so much," he said.

No — no — but I knew we should do it."

And then she recovered her composure, apparently at

He sat with his shirt turned back, showing his  
g throat almost like a girl's, and the towel in his  
, his hair sticking up wet.

Twenty guineas, mother! That's just what you  
ed to buy Arthur out. Now you need n't borrow  
It 'll just do."

Indeed, I shan't take it all," she said.

But why?"

Because I shan't."

Well — you have twelve pounds, I 'll have nine." They cavilled about sharing the twenty guineas. She  
ed to take only the five pounds she needed. He  
I not hear of it. So they got over the stress of  
on by quarrelling.

orel came home at night from the pit, saying:

They tell me Paul 's got first prize for his picture,  
sold it to Lord Henry Bentley for fifty pound."

Oh, what stories people do tell!" she cried.

Ha!" he answered. " I said I wor sure it wor a lie.  
they said tha 'd told Fred Hodgkisson."

As if I would tell him such stuff!"

Ha!" assented the miner.

He was disappointed nevertheless.

's true he has got the first prize," said Mrs. Mor  
miner sat heavily in his chair.

"Has he, beguy!" he exclaimed.

He stared across the room fixedly.

"But as for fifty pounds — such nonsense!"  
was silent awhile. "Major Moreton bought it for  
guineas, that's true."

"Twenty guineas! Tha niver says!" exclaimed

"Yes, and it was worth it."

"Ay!" he said. "I don't misdoubt it. But t  
guineas for a bit of a paintin' as he knocked off  
hour or two!"

He was silent with conceit of his son. Mrs.  
sniffed, as if it were nothing.

"And when does he handle th' money?" asked  
collier.

"That I could n't tell you. When the picture i  
home, I suppose."

There was silence. Morel stared at the sugar  
instead of eating his dinner. His black arm, wi  
hand all gnarled with work, lay on the table. Hi  
pretended not to see him rub the back of his hand  
his eyes, nor the smear in the coal-dust on his  
face.

"Yes, an' that other lad 'ud 'a done as much i  
hadna ha' killed 'im," he said quietly.

The thought of William went through Mrs. Mor  
a cold blade. It left her feeling she was tired, and w  
rest.

Paul was invited to dinner at Mr. Jordan's.  
wards he said:

"Mother, I want an evening suit."

"Yes, I was afraid you would," she said. Sh  
glad. There was a moment or two of silence. "T  
that one of William's," she continued, "that I know  
four pounds ten and which he'd only worn three tim

"Should you like me to wear it, mother?" he aske

"Yes. I think it would fit you — at least the  
*The trousers would want shortening.*"

He went upstairs and put on the coat

ming down, he looked strange in a flannel collar and flannel shirt-front, with an evening coat and vest. It is rather large.

"The tailor can make it right," she said, smoothing her hand over his shoulder. "It's beautiful stuff. I never could find in my heart to let your father wear the trousers, and very glad I am now."

And as she smoothed her hand over the silk collar she thought of her eldest son. But this son was living enough inside the clothes. She passed her hand down his back to him. He was alive and hers. The other was dead.

He went out to dinner several times in his evening suit. It had been William's. Each time his mother's heart was firm with pride and joy. He was started now. The dress shirts she and the children had bought for William were his shirt-front; he wore one of William's dress shirts. He had an elegant figure. His face was rough, but strong-looking and rather pleasing. He did not look particularly a gentleman, but she thought he looked quite a man.

He told her everything that took place, everything that was said. It was as if she had been there. And he was going to introduce her to these new friends who had dinner at seven-thirty in the evening.

"Go along with you!" she said. "What do they want to know me for?"

"They do!" he cried indignantly. "If they want to know me — and they say they do — then they want to know you, because you are quite as clever as I am."

"Go along with you, child!" she laughed.

But she began to spare her hands. They, too, were wrinkled now. The skin was shiny with so much water, the knuckles rather swollen. But she began to be careful to keep them out of soda. She regretted that they had been — so small and exquisite. And when she insisted on her having more stylish blouses to suit her age, she submitted. She even went so far as to all black velvet bow to be placed on her hair. Then

sniffed in her sarcastic manner, and was sure she looked sight. But she looked a lady, Paul declared, as much as Mrs. Major Moreton, and far, far nicer. The family was coming on. Only Morel remained unchanged, or rather, lapsed slowly.

Paul and his mother now had long discussions about life. Religion was fading into the background. He had shovelled away all the beliefs that would hamper him, had cleared the ground, and come more or less to the bedrock of belief that one should feel inside oneself for right and wrong, and should have the patience to gradually realize one's God. Now life interested him more.

"You know," he said to his mother, "I don't want to belong to the well-to-do middle class. I like my common people best. I belong to the common people."

"But if anyone else said so, my son, would n't you be in a tear! You know you consider yourself equal to any gentleman."

"In myself," he answered, "not in my class or my education or my manners. But in myself I am."

"Very well, then. Then why talk about the common people?"

"Because — the difference between people is n't in their class, but in themselves. Only from the middle classes one gets ideas, and from the common people — life itself, warmth. You feel their hates and loves."

"It's all very well, my boy. But, then, why don't you go and talk to your father's pals?"

"But they're rather different."

"Not at all. They're the common people. After all, whom do you mix with now — among the common people? Those that exchange ideas, like the middle classes. The rest don't interest you."

"But — there's the life — "

"I don't believe there's a jot more life from Miriam than you could get from any educated girl — say Miss Moreton. It is you who are snobbish about class." She frankly wanted him to climb into the middle class

not very difficult, she knew. And she wanted  
he end to marry a lady.

she began to combat him in his restless fretting,  
kept up his connection with Miriam, could neither  
see nor go the whole length of engagement. And  
desire seemed to bleed him of his energy. More-  
over mother suspected him of an unrecognized lean-  
ards Clara, and, since the latter was a married  
she wished he would fall in love with one of the  
a better station of life. But he was stupid, and  
refuse to love or even to admire a girl much, just  
she was his social superior.

boy," said his mother to him, "all your clever-  
ur breaking away from old things, and taking  
our own hands, does n't seem to bring you much  
ss."

at is happiness!" he cried. "It's nothing to  
ow am I to be happy?"

plump question disturbed her.

t's for you to judge, my lad. But if you could  
me good woman who would *make* you happy—  
began to think of settling your life — when you  
e means — so that you could work without all  
ting — it would be much better for you."

owned. His mother caught him on the raw of  
nd of Miriam. He pushed the tumbled hair off  
head, his eyes full of pain and fire.

I mean easy, mother," he cried. "That's a  
whole doctrine for life — ease of soul and physi-  
ort. And I do despise it."

do you!" replied his mother. "And do you call  
divine discontent?"

I don't care about its divinity. But damn  
ppiness! So long as life's full, it does n't matter  
it's happy or not. I'm afraid your happiness  
ore me."

never give it a chance," she said. Then sud-  
her passion of grief over him broke out. "B

it does matter!" she cried. "And you *ought* to happy, you ought to try to be happy, to live to happy. How could I bear to think your life would be a happy one!"

"Your own's been bad enough, mater, but it has left you so much worse off than the folk who've been happier. I reckon you've done well. And I am the same. Are n't I well enough off?"

"You're not, my son. Battle — battle — and suffer. It's about all you do, as far as I can see."

"But why not, my dear? I tell you it's the best —"

"It is n't. And one *ought* to be happy, one *ought*."

By this time Mrs. Morel was trembling violently. Struggles of this kind often took place between her and her son, when she seemed to fight for his very life against his own will to die. He took her in his arms. She was ill and pitiful.

"Never mind, Little," he murmured. "So long as you don't feel life's paltry and a miserable business, the rest does n't matter, happiness or unhappiness."

She pressed him to her.

"But I want you to be happy," she said pathetically.

"Eh, my dear — say rather you want me to live."

Mrs. Morel felt as if her heart would break for him. At this rate she knew he would not live. He had the poignant carelessness about himself, his own suffering, his own life, which is a form of slow suicide. It almost broke her heart. With all the passion of her strong nature she hated Miriam for having in this subtle way undermined his joy. It did not matter to her that Miriam could not help it. Miriam did it, and she hated her.

She wished so much he would fall in love with a girl equal to be his mate — educated and strong. But he would not look at anybody above him in station. *seemed to like* Mrs. Dawes. At any rate that feeling was wholesome. His mother prayed and prayed for him, *he might not be wasted*. That was all her prayer —

his soul or his righteousness, but that he might not waste. And while he slept, for hours and hours she slept and prayed for him.

He drifted away from Miriam imperceptibly, without wing he was going. Arthur only left the army to be tried. The baby was born six months after his coming. Mrs. Morel got him a job under the firm again, twenty-one shillings a week. She furnished for him, in the help of Beatrice's mother, a little cottage of rooms. He was caught now. It did not matter how he kicked and struggled, he was fast. For a time he fed, was irritable with his young wife, who loved him; went almost distracted when the baby, which was delicate, cried or gave trouble. He grumbled for hours over his mother. She only said, "Well, my lad, you did yourself, now you must make the best of it." And in the grit came out in him. He buckled to work, accepted his responsibilities, acknowledged that he belonged to his wife and child, and did make a good best man. He had never been very closely inbound into the family. Now he was gone altogether.

The months went slowly along. Paul had more or less come into connection with the Socialist, Suffragette, Unionist people in Nottingham, owing to his acquaintance with Clara. One day a friend of his and of Clara's, in the wood, asked him to take a message to Mrs. Dawes. He went in the evening across Sneinton Market to Blue-Hill. He found the house in a mean little street paved with granite cobbles and having causeways of dark, grooved bricks. The front-door went up a step or two off this rough pavement, where the feet of the passers-by rasped and clattered. The brown paint on the door was so old that the naked wood showed between the rents. He stood on the street below and knocked. There came a heavy footstep; a large, stout woman of about sixty towered above him. He looked up at her from the pavement. She had a rather severe face. She admitted him into the parlour, which opened on

the street. It was a small, stuffy, defunct room, mahogany, and deathly enlargements of photographs of departed people done in carbon. Mrs. Radford left him. She was stately, almost martial. In a moment Clara appeared. She flushed deeply, and he was covered with confusion. It seemed as if she did not like being discovered in her home circumstances.

"I thought it could n't be your voice," she said.

But she might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. She invited him out of the mausoleum of a parlour into the kitchen.

That was a little, darkish room too, but it was smothered in white lace. The mother had seated herself again by the cupboard, and was drawing thread from a web of lace. A clump of fluff and ravelled cotton was in her right hand, a heap of three-quarter-inch lace lay at her left, whilst in front of her was the mountain of lace web, piling the hearthrug. Threads of curly cotton pulled out from between the lengths of lace, strewed over the fender and the fireplace. Paul dared not go forward, for fear of treading on piles of white stuff.

On the table was a jenny for carding the lace. There was a pack of brown cardboard squares, a pack of cards of lace, a little box of pins, and on the sofa lay a heap of drawn lace.

The room was all lace, and it was so dark and warm that the white, snowy stuff seemed the more distinct.

"If you 're coming in you won't have to mind the work," said Mrs. Radford. "I know we 're about block up. But sit you down."

Clara, much embarrassed, gave him a chair against the wall opposite the white heaps. Then she herself took her place on the sofa, shamedly.

"Will you drink a bottle of stout?" Mrs. Radford asked. "Clara, get him a bottle of stout."

He protested, but Mrs. Radford insisted.

"You look as if you could do with it," she said. "Have n't you never any more colour than that?"

"It's only a thick skin I've got that does n't show the blood through," he answered.

Clara, ashamed and chagrined, brought him a bottle of stout and a glass. He poured out some of the black stuff.

"Well," he said, lifting the glass, "here's health!"

"And thank you," said Mrs. Radford.

He took a drink of stout.

"And light yourself a cigarette, so long as you don't set the house on fire," said Mrs. Radford.

"Thank you," he replied.

"Nay, you need n't thank me," she answered. "I s'll glad to smell a bit of smoke in th' 'ouse again. A use o' women is as dead as a house wi' no fire, to my ink'in'. I'm not a spider as likes a corner to myself, like a man about, if he's only something to snap at."

Clara began to work. Her jenny spun with a subdued buzz; the white lace hopped from between her fingers to the card. It was filled; she snipped off the length, and pinned the end down to the banded lace. Then she put a new card in her jenny. Paul watched her. She was square and magnificent. Her throat and arms were bare. The blood still mantled below her ears; she bent her head in shame of her humility. Her face was set on her work. Her arms were creamy and full of life beside the white lace; her large, well-kept hands worked with balanced movement, as if nothing would hurry them. Paul, not knowing, watched her all the time. He saw the back of her neck from the shoulder, as she bent her head; he saw the coil of dun hair; he watched her moving, brawling arms.

"I've heard a bit about you from Clara," continued the mother. "You're in Jordan's, are n't you?" She drew her lace unceasingly.

"Yes."

"Ay, well, and I can remember when Thomas Jordan used to ask me for one of my toffies."

"Did he?" laughed Paul. "And did he get it?"

"Sometimes he did, sometimes he did n't — which w latterly. For he's the sort that takes all and ga naught, he is — or used to be."

"I think he's very decent," said Paul.

"Yes; well, I'm glad to hear it."

Mrs. Radford looked across at him steadily. There was something determined about her that he liked. Her face was falling loose, but her eyes were calm, and there was something strong in her that made it seem she was not old; merely her wrinkles and loose cheeks were anachronism. She had the strength and sang-froid of a woman in the prime of life. She continued drawing the lace with slow, dignified movements. The big web came up inevitably over her apron; the length of lace flew away at her side. Her arms were finely shapen, bright glossy and yellow as old ivory. They had not the peculiar dull gleam that made Clara's so fascinating to him.

"And you've been going with Miriam Leivers?" the mother asked him.

"Well — " he answered.

"Yes, she's a nice girl," she continued. "She's very nice, but she's a bit too much above this world to suit my fancy."

"She is a bit like that," he agreed.

"She'll never be satisfied till she's got wings and can fly over everybody's head, she won't," she said.

Clara broke in, and he told her his message. She spoke humbly to him. He had surprised her in her drudgery. To have her humble made him feel as if he were lifting his head in expectation.

"Do you like jennyng?" he asked.

"What can a woman do!" she replied bitterly.

"Is it sweated?"

"More or less. Is n't *all* woman's work? That's another trick the men have played, since we force ourselves into the labour market."

"Now then, you shut up about the men," said the mother. "If the women was n't fools, the men wo-

ad uns, that's what I say. No man was ever that wi' me but what he got it back again. Not but they're a lousy lot, there's no denying it."

But they're all right really, are n't they?" he asked. Well, they're a bit different from women," she ered.

"Would you care to be back at Jordan's?" he asked a.

I don't think so," she replied.

Yes, she would!" cried her mother; "thank her if she could get back. Don't you listen to her. 's for ever on that 'igh horse of hers, an' its back's thin an' starved it'll cut her i' two one of these."

ara suffered badly from her mother. Paul felt as if yes were coming very wide open. Was n't he to take a's fulminations so seriously, after all? She spun hily at her work. He experienced a thrill of joy, king she might need his help. She seemed denied and ived of so much. And her arm moved mechanically, should never have been subdued to a mechanism, her head was bowed to the lace, that never should been bowed. She seemed to be stranded there among refuse that life has thrown away, doing her jennyng. as a bitter thing to her to be put aside by life, as had no use for her. No wonder she protested.

he came with him to the door. He stood below in the street, looking up at her. So fine she was in her ure and her bearing, she reminded him of Juno de ned. As she stood in the doorway, she winced from street, from her surroundings.

And you will go with Mrs. Hodgkinson to Huck-  
"

e was talking quite meaninglessly, only watching her. grey eyes at last met his. They looked dumb with liation, pleading with a kind of captive misery as shaken and at a loss. He had thought her hi ghty.

When he left her, he wanted to run. He went to station in a sort of dream, and was at home without realizing he had moved out of her street.

He had an idea that Susan, the overseer of the spinster girls, was about to be married. He asked her the next day.

"I say, Susan, I heard a whisper of your getting married. What about it?"

Susan flushed red.

"Who's been talking to you?" she replied.

"Nobody. I merely heard a whisper that you were thinking —"

"Well, I am, though you needn't tell anybody. What's more, I wish I was n't!"

"Nay, Susan, you won't make me believe that."

"Shan't I? You *can* believe it, though. I'd rather stop here a thousand times."

Paul was perturbed.

"Why, Susan?"

The girl's colour was high, and her eyes flashed.

"That's why!"

"And must you?"

For answer, she looked at him. There was about him a candour and gentleness which made the women trust him. He understood.

"Ah, I'm sorry," he said.

Tears came to her eyes.

"But you'll see it'll turn out all right. You'll make the best of it," he continued rather wistfully.

"There's nothing else for it."

"Yea, there's making the worst of it. Try and make it all right."

He soon made occasion to call again on Clara.

"Would you," he said, "care to come back to Jordan's?"

She put down her work, laid her beautiful arms on the table, and looked at him for some moments without answering. Gradually the flush mounted her cheek.

"Why?" she asked.

'aul felt rather awkward.

"Well, because Susan is thinking of leaving," he said.  
lara went on with her jennyng. The white lace  
ed in little jumps and bounds on to the card. He  
ted for her. Without raising her head, she said at  
, in a peculiar low voice:

"Have you said anything about it?"

"Except to you, not a word."

here was again a long silence.

"I will apply when the advertisement is out," she said.  
You will apply before that. I will let you know  
ctly when."

he went on spinning her little machine, and did not  
tradicthim.

lara came to Jordan's. Some of the older hands,  
ny among them, remembered her earlier rule, and  
ially disliked the memory. Clara had always been  
ey," reserved, and superior. She had never mixed  
n the girls as one of themselves. If she had occasion  
ind fault, she did it coolly and with perfect politeness,  
ch the defaulter felt to be a bigger insult than cross-  
. Towards Fanny, the poor, overstrung hunchback,  
ra was unfailingly compassionate and gentle, as a  
lt of which Fanny shed more bitter tears than ever  
rough tongues of the other overseers had caused

here was something in Clara that Paul disliked, and  
h that piqued him. If she were about, he always  
ched her strong throat or her neck, upon which the  
de hair grew low and fluffy. There was a fine down,  
ost invisible, upon the skin of her face and arms, and  
n once he had perceived it, he saw it always.

When he was at his work, painting in the afternoon,  
would come and stand near to him, perfectly motion-

Then he felt her, though she neither spoke nor  
bed him. Although she stood a yard away he fe  
he were in contact with her. Then he could pa

no more. He flung down the brushes, and turned to talk to her.

Sometimes she praised his work; sometimes she was critical and cold.

"You are affected in that piece," she would say; and as there was an element of truth in her condemnation his blood boiled with anger.

Again: "What of this?" he would ask enthusiastically.

"H'm!" She made a small doubtful sound. "It does n't interest me much."

"Because you don't understand it," he retorted.

"Then why ask me about it?"

"Because I thought you would understand."

She would shrug her shoulders in scorn of his work. She maddened him. He was furious. Then he abused her, and went into passionate exposition of his stuff. This amused and stimulated her. But she never owned that she had been wrong.

During the ten years that she had belonged to the women's movement she had acquired a fair amount of education, and, having had some of Miriam's passion to be instructed, had taught herself French, and could read in that language with a struggle. She considered herself as a woman apart, and particularly apart, from her class. The girls in the spiral department were all from good homes. It was a small, special industry, and had a certain distinction. There was an air of refinement in both rooms. But Clara was aloof also from her fellow-workers.

None of these things, however, did she reveal to Paul. She was not the one to give herself away. There was a sense of mystery about her. She was so reserved, he found, that she had much to reserve. Her history was open on the surface, but its inner meaning was hidden from everybody. It was exciting. And then sometimes he caught her looking at him from under her brows with an almost furtive, sullen scrutiny, which made him move quickly. Often she met his eyes. But then her own were,

covered over, revealing nothing. She gave him a lenient smile. She was to him extraordinarily prove, because of the knowledge she seemed to possess, gathered fruit of experience he could not attain. "day he picked up a copy of "Lettres de mon" from her work-bench.

"You read French, do you?" he cried.

She glanced round negligently. She was making an stocking of heliotrope silk, turning the spiral ie with slow, balanced regularity, occasionally g down to see her work or to adjust the needles; er magnificent neck, with its down and fine pencils r, shone white against the lavender, lustrous silk. rned a few more rounds, and stopped.

"What did you say?" she asked, smiling sweetly. l's eyes glittered at her insolent indifference to

"I did not know you read French," he said, very d you not?" she replied, with a faint, sarcastic otten swank!" he said, but scarcely loud enough heard.

shut his mouth angrily as he watched her. She l to scorn the work she mechanically produced; e hose she made were as nearly perfect as possible. ou don't like spiral work," he said.

"Well, all work is work," she answered, as if she all about it.

He marvelled at her coldness. He had to do every- notly. She must ~~be~~ something special.

"What would you prefer to do?" he asked.

She laughed at him indulgently, as she said:

"There is so little likelihood of my ever being given ce, that I have n't wasted time considering."

"Ah!" he said, contemptuous on his side now only say that because you're too proud to ov 'you want and can't get."

"You know me very well," she replied coldly.

"I know you think you're terrific great shakes, and that you live under the eternal insult of working in a factory."

He was very angry and very rude. She merely turned away from him in disdain. He walked whistling down the room, flirted and laughed with Hilda.

Later on he said to himself:

"What was I so impudent to Clara for?" He was rather annoyed with himself, at the same time glad. "Serve her right; she stinks with silent pride," he said to himself angrily.

In the afternoon he came down. There was a certain weight on his heart which he wanted to remove. He thought to do it by offering her chocolates.

"Have one?" he said. "I bought a handful to sweeten me up."

To his great relief, she accepted. He sat on the work-bench beside her machine, twisting a piece of silk round his finger. She loved him for his quick, unexpected movements, like a young animal. His feet swung as he pondered. The sweets lay strewn on the bench. She bent over her machine, grinding rhythmically, then stooping to see the stocking that hung beneath, pulled down by the weight. He watched the handsome crouching of her back, and the apron-strings curling on the floor.

"There is always about you," he said, "a sort of waiting. Whatever I see you doing, you're not really there: you are waiting — like Penelope when she did her weaving." He could not help a spurt of wickedness. "I'll call you Penelope," he said.

"Would it make any difference?" she said, carefully removing one of her needles.

"That does n't matter, so long as it pleases me. Here, I say, you seem to forget I'm your boss. It just occurs to me."

"And what does that mean?" she asked coolly.

"It means I've got a right to boss you."

"Is there anything you want to complain about?"

"Oh, I say, you need n't be nasty," he said angrily.

"I don't know what you want," she said, continuing her task.

"I want you to treat me nicely and respectfully."

"Call you 'sir,' perhaps?" she asked quietly.

"Yes, call me 'sir.' I should love it."

"Then I wish you would go upstairs, sir."

His mouth closed, and a frown came on his face. He jumped suddenly down.

"You're too blessed superior for anything," he said.

And he went away to the other girls. He felt he was being angrier than he had any need to be. In fact, he doubted slightly that he was showing off. But if he were, then he would. Clara heard him laughing, in a way she hated, with the girls down the next room.

When at evening he went through the department after the girls had gone, he saw his chocolates lying untouched in front of Clara's machine. He left them. In the morning they were still there, and Clara was at work. Later on Minnie, a little brunette they called Pussy, called to him:

"Hey, have n't you got a chocolate for anybody?"

"Sorry, Pussy," he replied. "I meant to have offered them; then I went and forgot 'em."

"I think you did," she answered.

"I'll bring you some this afternoon. You don't want them after they've been lying about, do you?"

"Oh, I'm not particular," smiled Pussy.

"Oh no," he said. "They'll be dusty."

He went up to Clara's bench.

"Sorry I left these things littering about," he said.

She flushed scarlet. He gathered them together in his fist.

"They'll be dirty now," he said. "You should have taken them. I wonder why you did n't. I meant to have told you I wanted you to."

He flung them out of the window into the yard before he just glanced at her. She winced from his eyes.

In the afternoon he brought another packet.

"Will you take some?" he said, offering them first to Clara. "These are fresh."

She accepted one, and put it onto the bench.

"Oh, take several — for luck," he said.

She took a couple more, and put them on the bench. Then she turned in confusion to her work. He went up the room.

"Here you are, Pussy," he said. "Don't be greedy."

"Are they all for her?" cried the others, rushing.

"Of course they're not," he said.

The girls clamoured round. Pussy drew back her mates.

"Come out!" she cried. "I can have first pick, I, Paul?"

"Be nice with 'em," he said, and went away.

"You are a dear," the girls cried.

"Tenpence," he answered.

He went past Clara without speaking. She felt three chocolate creams would burn her if she took them. It needed all her courage to slip them into her pocket of her apron.

The girls loved him and were afraid of him. He was so nice while he was nice, but if he were offended, distant, treating them as if they scarcely existed, or more than the bobbins of thread. And then, if they were impudent, he said quietly: "Do you mind going on with your work," and stood and watched.

When he celebrated his twenty-third birthday, his house was in trouble. Arthur was just going to be married. His mother was not well. His father, getting old man, and lame from his accidents, was given a poor job. Miriam was an eternal reproach. He owed himself to her, yet could not give himself. His house, moreover, needed his support. He was pulled in all directions. He was not glad it was his birthday that made him bitter.

*He got to work at eight o'clock. Most of the day*

turned up. The girls were not due until 8.30. As he changing his coat, he heard a voice behind him say: Paul, Paul, I want you," she said.

was Fanny, the hunchback, standing at the top of stairs, her face radiant with a secret. Paul looked er in astonishment.

I want you," she said.

e stood, at a loss.

Come on," she coaxed. "Come before you begin of letters."

e went down the half-dozen steps into her dry, now, "finishing-off" room. Fanny walked before him: black bodice was short — the waist was under her pits — and her green-black cashmere skirt seemed long, as she strode with big strides before the young himself so graceful. She went to her seat at the now end of the room, where the window opened on to ney-pots. Paul watched her thin hands and her flat vrists as she excitedly twitched her white apron, which spread on the bench in front of her. She hesitated. You didn't think we'd forgot you?" she asked, oachful.

Why?" he asked. He had forgotten his birthday elf.

'Why,' he says! 'Why!' Why, look here!" She led to the calendar, and he saw, surrounding the big & number "21," hundreds of little crosses in dead.

Oh, kisses for my birthday," he laughed. "How did know?"

Yes, you want to know, don't you?" Fanny mocked, ly delighted. "There's one from everybody — ex- Lady Clara — and two from some. But I shan't you how many I put."

Oh, I know, you 're spooney," he said.

There you are mistaken!" she cried indignant. "I never be so soft." Her voice was strong ar alto.

"You always pretend to be such a hard-hearted hussy," he laughed. "And you know you're as sentimental—"

"I'd rather be called sentimental than frozen meat," Fanny blurted. Paul knew she referred to Clara, and he smiled.

"Do you say such nasty things about me?" he laughed.

"No, my duck," the hunchback woman answered, lavishly tender. She was thirty-nine. "No, my duck, because you don't think yourself a fine figure in marble and us nothing but dirt. I'm as good as you, aren't I, Paul?" and the question delighted her.

"Why, we're not better than one another, are we?" he replied.

"But I'm as good as you, aren't I, Paul?" she persisted daringly.

"Of course you are. If it comes to goodness, you're better."

She was rather afraid of the situation. She might get hysterical.

"I thought I'd get here before the others — won't they say I'm deep! Now shut your eyes —" she said.

"And open your mouth, and see what God sends you," he continued, suiting action to words, and expecting a piece of chocolate. He heard the rustle of the apron and a faint clink of metal. "I'm going to look," he said.

He opened his eyes. Fanny, her long cheeks flushed, her blue eyes shining, was gazing at him. There was a little bundle of paint-tubes on the bench before him. He turned pale.

"No, Fanny," he said quickly.

"From us all," she answered hastily.

"No, but —"

"Are they the right sort?" she asked, rocking herself with delight.

"Jove! they're the best in the catalogue."

"But they're the right sorts?" she cried.

ey 're off the little list I 'd made to get when my  
ne in." He bit his lip.

y was overcome with emotion. She must turn  
versation.

ey was all on thorns to do it; they all paid  
ares, all except the Queen of Sheba."

Queen of Sheba was Clara.

d would n't she join?" Paul asked.

e did n't get the chance; we never told her; we  
going to have *her* bossing *this* show. We did n't  
er to join."

laughed at the woman. He was much moved. At  
must go. She was very close to him. Suddenly  
ng her arms round his neck and kissed him  
ntly.

an give you a kiss to-day," she said apologetically.  
ve looked so white, it 's made my heart ache."

kissed her, and left her. Her arms were so pitiful  
in that his heart ached also.

day he met Clara as he ran downstairs to wash  
ds at dinner-time.

u have stayed to dinner!" he exclaimed. It was  
l for her.

s; and I seem to have dined on old surgical-ap-  
stock. I *must* go out now, or I shall feel stale  
ibber right through."

lingered. He instantly caught at her wish.

u are going anywhere?" he asked.

went together up to the Castle. Outdoors she  
very plainly, down to ugliness; indoors she always  
nice. She walked with hesitating steps alongside  
bowing and turning away from him. Dowdy in  
and drooping, she showed to great disadvantage.  
ld scarcely recognize her strong form, that seemed  
iber with power. She appeared almost insignifi-  
crownning her stature in her stoop, as she shrank  
e public gaze.

astle grounds were very green and fresh. Cliv

ing the precipitous ascent, he laughed and chattered, but she was silent, seeming to brood over something. There was scarcely time to go inside the squat, square building that crowns the bluff of rock. They leaned upon the wall where the cliff runs sheer down to the Park. Below them, in their holes in the sandstone, pigeons preened themselves and cooed softly. Away down upon the boulevard at the foot of the rock, tiny trees stood in their own pools of shadow, and tiny people went scurrying about in almost ludicrous importance.

"You feel as if you could scoop up the folk like tupples, and have a handful of them," he said.

She laughed, answering:

"Yes; it is not necessary to get far off in order to see us proportionately. The trees are much more significant."

"Bulk only," he said.

She laughed cynically.

Away beyond the boulevard the thin stripes of metals showed upon the railway track, whose man was crowded with little stacks of timber, beside which smoking toy engines fussed. Then the silver string of the canal lay at random among the black heaps. Beyond, the dwellings, very dense on the river flat, looked like black, poisonous herbage, in thick rows and crowded beds, stretching right away, broken now and then by taller plants, right to where the river glistened in a high-glyph across the country. The steep scarp cliffs above the river looked puny. Great stretches of country darkened with trees and faintly brightened with corn-fields spread towards the haze, where the hills rose blue beyond grey.

"It is comforting," said Mrs. Dawes, "to think that town goes no farther. It is only a *little* sore upon country yet."

"A *little* scab," Paul said.

She shivered. She loathed the town. Looking drearily across at the country which was forbidden her, h

face pale and hostile, she reminded Paul of one bitter, remorseful angels.

"the town's all right," he said; "it's only  
ry. This is the crude, clumsy make-shift we've  
d on, till we find out what the idea is. The town  
e all right."

igeons in the pockets of rock, among the perched  
coed comfortably. To the left the large church  
lary rose into space, to keep close company with  
le, above the heaped rubble of the town. Mrs.  
niled brightly as she looked across the country.  
el better," she said.

nk you," he replied. "Great compliment!"  
my brother!" she laughed.

! that's snatching back with the left hand what  
e with the right, and no mistake," he said.  
ughed in amusement at him.

"what was the matter with you?" he asked. "I  
u were brooding something special. I can see  
p of it on your face yet."

ink I will not tell you," she said.

right, hug it," he answered.

ushed and bit her lip.

" she said, "it was the girls."

at about 'em?" Paul asked.

y have been plotting something for a week now,  
ay they seem particularly full of it. All alike;  
ilt me with their secrecy."

they?" he asked in concern.

ould not mind," she went on, in the metallic, angry  
f they did not thrust it into my face — the fact  
y have a secret."

like women," said he.

hateful, their mean gloating," she said intensely.  
was silent. He knew what the girls gloated over.  
*worry to be the cause of this new dissension.*

*can have all the secrets in the world," she we  
ing bitterly; "but they might refrain fr*

glorying in them, and making me feel more out of it than ever. It is — it is almost unbearable."

Paul thought for a few minutes. He was much perturbed.

"I will tell you what it's all about," he said, pale and nervous. "It's my birthday, and they've bought me a fine lot of paints, all the girls. They're jealous of you" — he felt her stiffen coldly at the word "jealous" — "merely because I sometimes bring you a book," he added slowly. "But, you see, it's only a trifle. Don't bother about it, will you — because" — he laughed quickly — "well, what would they say if they saw us here now, in spite of their victory?"

She was angry with him for his clumsy reference to their present intimacy. It was almost insolent of him. Yet he was so quiet, she forgave him, although it cost her an effort.

Their two hands lay on the rough stone parapet of the Castle wall. He had inherited from his mother a fineness of mould, so that his hands were small and vigorous. Hers were large, to match her large limbs, but white and powerful looking. As Paul looked at them he knew her. "She is wanting somebody to take her hands — for all she is so contemptuous of us," he said to himself. And she saw nothing but his two hands, so warm and alive, which seemed to live for her. He was brooding now, staring out over the country from under sullen brows. The little, interesting diversity of shapes had vanished from the scene; all that remained was a vast, dark matrix of sorrow and tragedy, the same in all the houses and the river-flats and the people and the birds; they were only shapen differently. And now that the forms seemed to have melted away, there remained the mass from which all the landscape was composed, a dark mass of struggle and pain. The factory, the girls, his mother, the large, uplifted church, the thicket of the town, merged into one atmosphere — dark, brooding, sorrowful, every bit.

"Is that two o'clock striking?" Mrs. Dawes said in surprise.

Paul started, and everything sprang into form, retained its individuality, its forgetfulness, and its cheerfulness.

They hurried back to work.

When he was in the rush of preparing for the night's post, examining the work up from Fanny's room, which smelt of ironing, the evening postman came in.

"'Mr. Paul Morel,'" he said smiling, handing Paul a package. "A lady's handwriting! Don't let the girls see it."

The postman, himself a favourite, was pleased to make fun of the girls' affection for Paul.

It was a volume of verse with a brief note: "You will allow me to send you this, and so spare me my isolation. I also sympathize and wish you well.—C. D." Paul flushed hot.

"Good Lord! Mrs. Dawes. She can't afford it. Good word, who ever'd have thought it!"

He was suddenly intensely moved. He was filled with the warmth of her. In the glow he could almost feel her as if she were present—her arms, her shoulders, her bosom, see them, feel them, almost contain them.

This move on the part of Clara brought them into closer intimacy. The other girls noticed that when Paul met Mrs. Dawes his eyes lifted and gave that peculiar right greeting which they could interpret. Knowing he was unaware, Clara made no sign, save that occasionally he turned aside her face from him when he came upon her.

They walked out together very often at dinner-time; she was quite open, quite frank. Everybody seemed to feel that he was quite unaware of the state of his own feeling, and that nothing was wrong. He talked to her now with some of the old fervour with which he had talked to Miriam, but he cared less about the talk, did not bother about his conclusions.

One day in October they went out tea. Suddenly they came to a halt on He climbed and sat on a gate, she sat on afternoon was perfectly still, with a dim sheaves glowing through. They were quiet.

"How old were you when you married quietly."

"Twenty-two."

Her voice was subdued, almost submissive. Tell him now.

"It is eight years ago?"

"Yes."

"And when did you leave him?"

"Three years ago."

"Five years! Did you love him when him?"

She was silent for some time; then she said,

"I thought I did — more or less. I did not think about it. And he wanted me. I was very fond of him."

"And you sort of walked into it without thinking?"

"Yes. I seemed to have been asleep all my life."

"Somnambule? But — when did you wake up?"

"I don't know that I ever did, or ever w~~as~~ I was a child."

"You went to sleep as you grew to be a woman! And he didn't wake you?"

"No; he never got there," she replied, in a low voice. The brown birds dashed over the hedges with their wings spread. Her hips stood naked and scarlet.

"Got where?" he asked.

"At me. He never really mattered to me. The afternoon was so gently warm and dim that the shadows of the cottages burned among the blue haze of the day. He could feel, but he could not understand what Clara was saying.

"But why did you leave him? Was it because you?"

ed lightly.  
ort of degraded me. He would s—  
d n't get me. And then I did  
as if I was fastened and bound up  
7." 22

at all see.

" always dirty?" he asked.

replied slowly. " And then he would  
get at me, really. And then he got  
al!"

" id you leave him finally?"

because he was unfaithful to me."

both silent for some time. Her hands  
st as she balanced. He put his arms around her.

beat thickly,

" 10 — were you ever — did you ever  
11 — love anyone?"

" 12 — love anyone?"

" 13 — and I was willing —"

rove to keep their voices steady.

" 14 — loves you," he said.

" 15 — she here.

" 16 — it now, broken

" 17 — concert on Saturday Farm," he  
e asked.

" 18 — and I have been sixteen — that's a  
d.

" 19 — does n't go right —

stared broodingly into her teacup, twisting her wedding ring all the time. In her abstraction she took the ring off her finger, stood it up, and spun it upon the table. The gold became a diaphanous, glittering globe. It fell and the ring was quivering upon the table. She spun again and again. Paul watched, fascinated.

But she was a married woman, and he believed in simple friendship. And he considered that he was perfectly honourable with regard to her. It was only a friend between man and woman, such as any civilized person might have.

He was like so many young men of his own age. He had become so complicated in him that he would have denied that he ever could want Clara or Miriam or any woman whom he knew. Sex desire was a sort of detached thing, that did not belong to a woman. He loved Miriam with his soul. He grew warm at the thought of Clara, he battled with her, he knew the curves of breast and shoulders as if they had been moulded in him; and yet he did not positively desire her. He would have denied it for ever. He believed himself really better suited to Miriam. If ever he should marry, some time in the far future, it would be his duty to marry Miriam. When he gave Clara to understand, and she said nothing, he left him to his courses. He came to her, Mrs. Dawe whenever he could. Then he wrote frequently to Miriam and visited the girl occasionally. So he went on through the winter; but he seemed not so fretted. His mother was easier about him. She thought he was getting a wife from Miriam.

Miriam knew now how strong was the attraction of Clara for him; but still she was certain that the best man would triumph. His feeling for Mrs. Dawe, who, moreover, was a married woman — was shallow and temporal, compared with his love for herself. He would come back to her, she was sure; with some of his youthfulness gone, perhaps, but cured of his desire for other things which other women than herself could

She could bear all if he were inwardly true to  
and must come back.

He saw none of the anomaly of his position. Miriam  
his old friend, lover, and she belonged to Bestwood  
home and his youth. Clara was a newer friend, and  
belonged to Nottingham, to life, to the world. It  
meant to him quite plain.

Mrs. Dawes and he had many periods of coolness, when  
he saw little of each other; but they always came to-  
gether again.

"Were you horrid with Baxter Dawes?" he asked her.  
as a thing that seemed to trouble him.

"In what way?"

"Oh, I don't know. But were n't you horrid with him?  
n't you do something that knocked him to pieces?"

"What, pray?"

Making him feel as if he were nothing — *I* know,"  
I declared.

"You are so clever, my friend," she said coolly.

The conversation broke off there. But it made her  
think with him for some time.

He very rarely saw Miriam now. The friendship  
between the two women was not broken off, but con-  
siderably weakened.

"Will you come in to the concert on Sunday after-  
noon?" Clara asked him just after Christmas.

"I promised to go up to Willey Farm," he replied.

"Oh, very well."

"You don't mind, do you?" he asked.

"Why should I?" she answered.

Which almost annoyed him.

"You know," he said, "Miriam and I have been a lot  
each other ever since I was sixteen — that's seven  
years now."

"It's a long time," Clara replied.

"Yes; but somehow she — it does n't go right —"

"How?" asked Clara.

"She seems to draw me and draw me, and she would

leave a single hair of me free to fall out and blow away — she'd keep it."

"But you like to be kept."

"No," he said, "I don't. I wish it could be normal give and take — like me and you. I want a woman to keep me, but not in her pocket."

"But if you love her, it couldn't be normal, like me and you."

"Yes; I should love her better then. She sort wants me so much that I can't give myself."

"Wants you how?"

"Wants the soul out of my body. I can't help shrinking back from her."

"And yet you love her!"

"No, I don't love her. I never even kiss her."

"Why not?" Clara asked.

"I don't know."

"I suppose you're afraid," she said.

"I'm not. Something in me shrinks from her like hell — she's so good, when I'm not good."

"How do you know what she is?"

"I do! I know she wants a sort of soul union."

"But how do you know what she wants?"

"I've been with her for seven years."

"And you have n't found out the very first thing about her."

"What's that?"

"That she does n't want any of your soul communion. That's your own imagination. She wants you."

He pondered over this. Perhaps he was wrong.

"But she seems —" he began.

"You've never tried," she answered.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE TEST ON MIRIAM

VITH the spring came again the old madness and battle. Now he knew he would have to go to Miriam. But what was his reluctance? He told himself it was only a sort of overstrong virginity in her which neither could break through. He might have married her; but his circumstances at home made it difficult, and, moreover, he did not want to marry. Marriage was for life, and because they had become close companions, he and she, he did not see that it should inevitably follow they should be man and wife. He didn't feel that he wanted marriage with Miriam. He said he did. He would have given his head to have felt joyous desire to marry her and to have her. Then why could n't he bring it off? There was some obstacle; but what was the obstacle? It lay in the physical bond. He shrank from the physical contact. But why? With her he felt bound up inside himself. He could not get out to her. Something struggled in him, but he could not get to her. Why? She loved him. Clara and she even wanted him; then why could n't he go to her, make love to her, kiss her? Why, when she put her hand in his, timidly, as they walked, did he feel he would burst forth in brutality and recoil? He owed himself to her; he wanted to belong to her. Perhaps the recoil and shrinking from her was love in its first fierce modesty. He had no aversion for her. No, it was the opposite; there was a strong desire battling with a still stronger shyness and virginity. It seemed as if virginity were a creative force, which fought and won in both of them; with her he felt it so hard to overcome; yet he

nearest to her, and with her alone could he deliberately break through. And he owed himself to her. Then, they could get things right, they could marry; but he would not marry unless he could feel strong in the joy of it — never. He could not have faced his mother. It seemed to him that to sacrifice himself in a marriage he did not want would be degrading, and would undo all his life, make it a nullity. He would try what he *could do*.

And he had a great tenderness for Miriam. Always she was sad, dreaming her religion; and he was nearly a religion to her. He could not bear to fail her. It would all come right if they tried.

He looked round. A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself, bound in by their own virginity, which they could not break out of. They were so sensitive to their women that they would go without them forever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice. Being the sons of mothers whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine sanctities, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could easier deny themselves than incur any reproach from a woman; for a woman was like their mother, and they were full of the sense of their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person.

He went back to her. Something in her, when he looked at her, brought the tears almost to his eyes. One day he stood behind her as she sang. Annie was playing a song on the piano. As Miriam sang her mouth seemed hopeless. She sang like a nun singing to heaven. It reminded him so much of the mouth and eyes of one who sings beside a Botticelli Madonna, so spiritual. Again, hot as steel, came up the pain in him. Why must he ask her for the other thing? Why was there *his blood* battling with her? If only he could have been always gentle, tender with her, breathing with her the atmosphere of reverie and religious dreams, he would give his right hand. It was not fair to hurt her. T

ned an eternal maidenhood about her; and when he thought of her mother, he saw the great brown eyes of a maiden who was nearly scared and shocked out of her virgin maidenhood, but not quite, in spite of her seven children. They had been born almost leaving her outnumbered, not of her, but upon her. So she could never let them go, because she never had possessed them.

Mrs. Morel saw him going again frequently to Miriam, and was astonished. He said nothing to his mother, did not explain nor excuse himself. If he came home, and she reproached him, he frowned and turned on her in an overbearing way:

"I shall come home when I like," he said; "I am old enough."

"Must she keep you till this time?"

"It is I who stay," he answered.

And she lets you? But very well," she said. And she went to bed, leaving the door unlocked for him; but she lay listening until he came, often longer. It was a great bitterness to her that he had gone back to Miriam. She recognized, however, the uselessness of any further interference. He went to Willey Farm a man now, not as a youth. She had no right over him. There was a coldness between him and her. He hardly told her anything. Discarded, she waited on him, cooked for him still, and loved to slave for him; her face closed again like a mask. There was nothing left for her to do now but the housework; for all the rest had gone to Miriam. She could not forgive him. William killed the joy and the warmth in him. He had been such a jolly lad, and full of the warmest affection; but he grew colder, more and more irritable and gloomy. Reminded her of William; but Paul was worse. He spoke things with more intensity, and more realization of what he was about. His mother knew how he was suffering for want of a woman, and she saw him going to Miriam. If he had made up his mind, nothing on earth could alter him. Mrs. Morel was tired. She began

give up at last; she had finished. She was in  
way.

He went on determinedly. He realized more or what his mother felt. It only hardened his soul. made himself callous towards her; but it was like being callous to his own health. It undermined him quite yet he persisted.

He lay back in the rocking-chair at Willey Farm evening. He had been talking to Miriam for some weeks but had not come to the point. Now he said suddenly

"I am twenty-four, almost."

She had been brooding. She looked up at him suddenly in surprise.

"Yes. What makes you say it?"

There was something in the charged atmosphere that she dreaded.

"Sir Thomas More says one can marry at twenty-four."

She laughed quaintly, saying:

"Does it need Sir Thomas More's sanction?"

"No; but one ought to marry about then."

"Ay," she answered broodingly; and she waited.

"I can't marry you," he continued slowly, "not because we've no money, and they depend on me home."

She sat half-guessing what was coming.

"But I want to marry now—"

"You want to marry?" she repeated.

"A woman—you know what I mean."

She was silent.

"Now, at last, I must," he said.

"Ay," she answered.

"And you love me?"

She laughed bitterly.

"Why are you ashamed of it?" he answered. "I would n't be ashamed before your God, why are you before people?"

"Nay," she answered deeply, "I am not ashamed."

" You are," he replied bitterly; " and it 's my fault. You know I can't help being — as I am — don't I? "

" I know you can't help it," she replied.

" I love you an awful lot — then there is something right."

" Where? " she answered, looking at him.

" Oh, in me! It is I who ought to be ashamed — like a spiritual cripple. And I am ashamed. It is misery. Why is it? "

" I don't know," replied Miriam.

" And I don't know," he repeated. " Don't you think we have been too fierce in our what they call purity? Don't you think that to be so much afraid and averse to a sort of dirtiness? "

She looked at him with startled dark eyes.

" You recoiled away from anything of the sort, and took the motion from you, and recoiled also, perhaps because."

There was silence in the room for some time.

" Yes," she said, " it is so."

" There is between us," he said, " all these years of shame. I feel naked enough before you. Do you understand? "

" I think so," she answered.

" And you love me? "

She laughed.

" Don't be bitter," he pleaded.

She looked at him and was sorry for him; his eyes were dark with torture. She was sorry for him; it was worse for him to have this deflected love than for her, who could never be properly mated. He was restless, for ever urging forward and trying to find a way. He might do as he liked, and have what he liked of her.

" Nay," she said softly, " I am not bitter."

*she felt she could bear anything for him; she would give up for him. She put her hand on his knee as*

leaned forward in his chair. He took it and kissed but it hurt to do so. He felt he was putting her aside. He sat there sacrificed to her purity, which was more like nullity. How could he kiss her hand passionately, when it would drive her away, and leave nothing but pain? Yet slowly he drew her to him and kissed her.

They knew each other too well to pretend anything. As she kissed him, she watched his eyes; they were staring across the room, with a peculiar dark blaze in them that fascinated her. He was perfectly still. She could feel his heart throbbing heavily in his breast.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

The blaze in his eyes shuddered, became uncertain.

"I was thinking, all the while, I love you. I have been obstinate."

She sank her head on his breast.

"Yes," she answered.

"That's all," he said, and his voice seemed sure, his mouth was kissing her throat.

Then she raised her head and looked into his eyes with her full gaze of love. The blaze struggled, seemed to try to get away from her, and then was quenched. He turned his head quickly aside. It was a moment of anguish.

"Kiss me," she whispered.

He shut his eyes, and kissed her, and his arms followed her closer and closer.

When she walked home with him over the fields, he said:

"I am glad I came back to you. I feel so safe with you—as if there was nothing to hide. We will be happy?"

"Yes," she murmured, and the tears came to her eyes.

"Some sort of perversity in our souls," he said, "makes us not want, get away from, the very thing we want. We have to fight against that."

"Yes," she said, and she felt stunned.

As she stood under the drooping thorn-tree, in the darkness by the roadside, he kissed her, and his fingers lingered over her face. In the darkness, where he could not see her but only feel her, his passion flooded him. He sped her very close.

‘Sometime you will have me?’ he murmured, hiding his face on her shoulder. It was so difficult.

‘Not now,’ she said.

His hopes and his heart sunk. A dreariness came over him.

‘No,’ he said.

His clasp of her slackened.

‘I love to feel your arm *there!*’ she said, pressing his arm against her back, where it went round her waist. ‘It rests me so.’

He tightened the pressure of his arm upon the small of her back to rest her.

‘We belong to each other,’ he said.

‘Yes.’

‘Then why should n’t we belong to each other together?’

‘But —’ she faltered.

‘I know it’s a lot to ask,’ he said; ‘but there’s much risk for you really — not in the Gretchen way. I can trust me there?’

‘Oh, I can trust you.’ The answer came quick and strong. ‘It’s not that — it’s not that at all — but —’  
‘What?’

She hid her face in his neck with a little cry of misery.  
‘I don’t know!’ she cried.

She seemed slightly hysterical, but with a sort of terror. His heart died in him.

‘You don’t think it ugly?’ he asked.

‘No, not now. You have *taught* me it is n’t.’

‘You are afraid?’

She calmed herself hastily.

‘Yes, I am only afraid,’ she said.  
She kissed her tenderly.

"Never mind," he said. "You shall please yourself." Suddenly she gripped his arms round him, and clenched her body stiff.

"You *shall* have me," she said, through her teeth.

His heart beat up again like fire. He folded her close and his mouth was on her throat. She could not bear it. She drew away. He disengaged her.

"Won't you be late?" she asked gently.

He sighed, scarcely hearing what she said. She waited, wishing he would go. At last he kissed her quickly and climbed the fence. Looking round he saw the pale blotch of her face down in the darkness under the hanging tree. There was no more of her but this pale blotch.

"Good-bye!" she called softly. She had no body, only a voice and a dim face. He turned away and ran down the road, his fists clenched; and when he came to the wall over the lake he leaned there, almost stunned looking up the black water.

Miriam plunged home over the meadows. She was not afraid of people, what they might say; but she dreaded the issue with him. Yes, she would let him have her if he insisted; and then, when she thought of it afterwards, her heart went down. He would be disappointed, he would find no satisfaction, and then he would go away. Yet he was so insistent; and over this, which did not seem so all-important to her, was their love to break down. After all, he was only like other men, seeking his satisfaction. Oh, but there was something more in him, something deeper! She could trust to it, in spite of her desires. He said that possession was a great moment in life. All strong emotions concentrated there. Perhaps it was so. There was something divine in it; then she would submit, religiously, to the sacrifice. He should have her. And at the thought her whole body became itself involuntarily, hard, as if against something. Life forced her through this gate of suffering, too,

would submit. At any rate, it would give him what wanted, which was her deepest wish. She brooded and brooded herself towards accepting him. He courted her now like a lover. Often, when he grew she put his face from her, held it between her hands, looked in his eyes. He could not meet her gaze. dark eyes, full of love, earnest and searching, made turn away. Not for an instant would she let him get. Back again he had to torture himself into a of his responsibility and hers. Never any relaxing, or any leaving himself to the great hunger and impersonality of passion; he must be brought back to a berate, reflective creature. As if from a swoon of sion she called him back to the littleness, the personal tionship. He could not bear it. "Leave me alone eave me alone!" he wanted to cry; but she wanted to look at her with eyes full of love. His eyes, full he dark, impersonal fire of desire, did not belong to

'here was a great crop of cherries at the farm. The s at the back of the house, very large and tall, hung k with scarlet and crimson drops, under the dark es. Paul and Edgar were gathering in the fruit one ing. It had been a hot day, and now the clouds e rolling in the sky, dark and warm. Paul climbed i in the tree, above the scarlet roofs of the buildings. wind, moaning steadily, made the whole tree rock a subtle, thrilling motion that stirred the blood. The ng man, perched insecurely in the slender branches, ed till he felt slightly drunk, reached down the ghs, where the scarlet beady cherries hung thick erneath, and tore off handful after handful of the s, cool-fleshed fruit. Cherries touched his ears and neck as he stretched forward, their chill finger-tips lling a flash down his blood. All shades of red, from olden vermillion to a rich crimson, glowed and met his under a darkness of leaves.

e sun, going down, suddenly caught the bro

clouds. Immense piles of gold flared out in the south-east, heaped in soft, glowing yellow right up the sky. The world, till now dusk and grey, reflected the great glow, astonished. Everywhere the trees, and the ground and the far-off water, seemed roused from the twilight and shining.

Miriam came out wondering.

"Oh!" Paul heard her mellow voice call, "isn't it wonderful?"

He looked down. There was a faint gold glimmer on her face, that looked very soft, turned up to him.

"How high you are!" she said.

Beside her, on the rhubarb leaves, were four dead birds, thieves that had been shot. Paul saw some cherries hanging quite bleached, like skeletons, picked clean of flesh. He looked down again to Miriam.

"Clouds are on fire," he said.

"Beautiful!" she cried.

She seemed so small, so soft, so tender, down the hill. He threw a handful of cherries at her. She was startled and frightened. He laughed with a low, chuckling sound and pelted her. She ran for shelter, picking up some cherries. Two fine red pairs she hung over her ears, then she looked up again.

"Have isn't you got enough?" she asked.

"Nearly. It is like being on a ship up here."

"And how long will you stay?"

"While the sunset lasts."

She went to the fence and sat there, watching the great clouds fall to pieces, and go in immense, rose-coloured ruin towards the darkness. Gold flamed to scarlet, scarlet to pain in its intense brightness. Then the scarlet sank to rose, and rose to crimson, and quickly the passion faded out of the sky. All the world was dark grey. Paul scrambled quickly down with his basket, tearing his shirt-sleeve as he did so.

"They are lovely," said Miriam, fingering the cherries.

"I've torn my sleeve," he answered.

She took the three-cornered rip, saying:

"I shall have to mend it." It was near the shoulder.  
She put her fingers through the tear. "How warm!" said.

He laughed. There was a new, strange note in his voice, one that made her pant.

"Shall we stay out?" he said.

"Won't it rain?" she asked.

"No, let us walk a little way."

They went down the fields and into the thick plantation of fir-trees and pines.

"Shall we go in among the trees?" he asked.

"Do you want to?"

"Yes."

It was very dark among the firs, and the sharp spines pricked her face. She was afraid. Paul was silent and unresponsive.

"I like the darkness," he said. "I wish it were darker — good, thick darkness."

He seemed to be almost unaware of her as a person: she was only to him then a woman. She was afraid.

He stood against a pine-tree trunk and took her in his arms. She relinquished herself to him, but it was a sacrifice in which she felt something of horror. This dark-voiced, oblivious man was a stranger to her.

Later it began to rain. The pine-trees smelled very strongly. Paul lay with his head on the ground, on the bed of pine-needles, listening to the sharp hiss of the rain and the steady, keen noise. His heart was down, very heavy. Only he realized that she had not been with him all the time, that her soul had stood apart, in a sort of horror. She was physically at rest, but no more. Very dreary, very sad, and very tender, his fingers wandered over her face pitifully. Now again she loved him deeply. She was tender and beautiful.

"The rain!" he said.

"Yes — is it coming on you?"

She put her hands over him, on his hair, on

shoulders, to feel if the raindrops fell on him. She loved him dearly. He, as he lay with his face on the dead pine-leaves, felt extraordinarily quiet. He did not mind if the raindrops came on him: he would have lain and got wet through: he felt as if nothing mattered, as if living were smeared away into the beyond, near and quite lovable. This strange, gentle reaching-out to death was new to him.

"We must go," said Miriam.

"Yes," he answered, but did not move.

To him now, life seemed a shadow, day a white shadow night, and death, and stillness, and inaction, this seemed like *being*. To be alive, to be urgent and insistent — that was *not-to-be*. The highest of all was to melt out into the darkness and sway there, identified with the great Being.

"The rain is coming in on us," said Miriam.

He rose, and assisted her.

"It is a pity," he said.

"What?"

"To have to go. I feel so still."

"Still!" she repeated.

"Stiller than I have ever been in my life."

He was walking with his hand in hers. She pressed his fingers, feeling a slight fear. Now he seemed beyond her; she had a fear lest she should lose him.

"The fir-trees are like presences on the darkness: each one only a presence."

She was afraid, and said nothing.

"A sort of hush: the whole night wondering and asleep: I suppose that's what we do in death — sleep in wonder."

She had been afraid before of the brute in him: now of the mystic. She trod beside him in silence. The rain fell with a heavy "Hush!" on the trees. At last they gained the cart-shed.

"Let us stay here awhile," he said.

There was a sound of rain everywhere, smothering everything.

' I feel so strange and still,' he said; " along with rything."

' Ay,' she answered patiently.

He seemed again unaware of her, though he held her close.

' To be rid of our individuality, which is our will, ch is our effort — to live effortless, a kind of conous sleep — that is very beautiful, I think; that is after-life — our immortality.'

' Yes?'

' Yes — and very beautiful to have.'

' You don't usually say that.'

' No.'

In a while they went indoors. Everybody looked at m curiously. He still kept the quiet, heavy look in eyes, the stillness in his voice. Instinctively, they all him alone.

About this time Miriam's grandmother, who lived in a y cottage in Woodlinton, fell ill, and the girl was t to keep house. It was a beautiful little place. The stage had a big garden in front, with red brick walls, inst which the plum-trees were nailed. At the back other garden was separated from the fields by a tall hedge. It was very pretty. Miriam had not much do, so she found time for her beloved reading, and writing little introspective pieces which interested

At the holiday-time her grandmother, being better, driven to Derby to stay with her daughter for a day two. She was a crotchety old lady, and might return second day or the third; so Miriam stayed alone in cottage, which also pleased her.

Paul used often to cycle over, and they had as a rule ceful and happy times. He did not embarrass her ch; but then on the Monday of the holiday he was to nd a whole day with her.

It was perfect weather. He left his mother, telling where he was going. She would be alone all the d

It cast a shadow over him; but he had three days to himself, when he was going to do as he liked. It was sweet to rush through the morning lanes on his bicycle.

He got to the cottage at about eleven o'clock. Miriam was busy preparing dinner. She looked so perfectly at home, keeping with the little kitchen, ruddy and busy. He kissed her and sat down to watch. The room was small and cosy. The sofa was covered all over with a sort of lining in squares of red and pale blue, old, much washed, but pretty. There was a stuffed owl in a case over a corner cupboard. The sunlight came through the leaves of the scented geraniums in the window. She was cooking chicken in his honour. It was their cottage for the day, and they were man and wife. He beat the eggs for her, and peeled the potatoes. He thought she gave a feeling of home almost like his mother; and no one could look more beautiful, with her tumbled curls, when she was flushed from the fire.

The dinner was a great success. Like a young husband, he carved. They talked all the time with unflagging zest. Then he wiped the dishes she had washed, and they went out down the fields. There was a bright little brook that ran into a bog at the foot of a very steep bank. Here they wandered, picking still a few marsh marigolds and many big blue forget-me-nots. Then she sat on the bank with her hands full of flowers, mostly golden water-blobs. As she put her face down into the marigolds, it was all overcast with a yellow shine.

"Your face is bright," he said, "like a transfiguration."

She looked at him, questioning. He laughed pleadingly to her, laying his hand on hers. Then he kissed her fingers, then her face.

The world was all steeped in sunshine, and quite still yet not asleep, but quivering with a kind of expectancy.

"I have never seen anything more beautiful than you," he said. He held her hand fast all the time.

"And the water singing to itself as it runs — do you love it?" She looked at him full of love. His eyes were very dark, very bright.

"Don't you think it's a great day?" he asked.

She murmured her assent. She was happy, and he saw it.

"And our day — just between us," he said.

They lingered a little while. Then they stood up upon the sweet thyme, and he looked down at her simply.

"Will you come?" he asked.

Then went back to the house, hand-in-hand, in silence. The chickens came scampering down the path to her. He locked the door, and they had the little house to themselves.

He never forgot seeing her as she lay on the bed, when he was unfastening his collar. First he saw only her beauty, and was blind with it. She had the most beautiful body he had ever imagined. He stood unable to move or speak, looking at her, his face half smiling with wonder. And then he wanted her, but as he went forward to her, her hands lifted in a little pleading movement, and he looked at her face, and stopped. Her big brown eyes were watching him, still and resigned and wing; she lay as if she had given herself up to sacrifice: here was her body for him; but the look at the back of her eyes, like a creature awaiting immolation, arrested him, and all his blood fell back.

"You are sure you want me?" he asked, as if a cold shadow had come over him.

"Yes, quite sure."

She was very quiet, very calm. She only realized that he was doing something for him. He could hardly bear

She lay to be sacrificed for him because she loved him so much. And he had to sacrifice her. For a second, he wished he were sexless or dead. Then he shut his eyes again to her, and his blood beat back again.

And afterwards he loved her — loved her to the last of his being. He loved her. But he wanted, so

how, to cry. There was something he could not bear for her sake. He stayed with her till quite late at night. As he rode home he felt that he was finally initiated. He was a youth no longer. But why had he the dull pain in his soul? Why did the thought of death, the after-life, seem so sweet and consoling?

He spent the week with Miriam, and wore her out with his passion before it was gone. He had always almost wilfully, to put her out of count, and act from the brute strength of his own feelings. And he could not do it often, and there remained afterwards always the sense of failure and of death. If he were really with her, he had to put aside himself and his desire. If he would have her, he had to put her aside.

"When I come to you," he asked her, his eyes darkened with pain and shame, "you don't really want me, do you?"

"Ah, yes!" she replied quickly.

He looked at her.

"Nay," he said.

She began to tremble.

"You see," she said, taking his face and shutting him out against her shoulder — "you see — as we are — how can I get used to you? It would come all right if we were married."

He lifted her head and looked at her.

"You mean, now, it is always too much shock?"

"Yes — and —"

"You are always clenched against me."

She was trembling with agitation.

"You see," she said, "I'm not used to the thought —"

"You are lately," he said.

"But all my life. Mother said to me, 'There is ~~one~~ ~~nothing~~ in marriage that is always dreadful, but you have to bear it.' And I believed it."

"And still believe," he said.

"No!" she cried hastily. "I believe, as you do."

ving, even in *that* way, is the high-water mark of ving."

"That does n't alter the fact that you never *want* it."

"No," she said, taking his head in her arms and rock-  
g in despair. "Don't say so! You don't understand." He rocked with pain. "Don't I want your children?"

"But not me."

"How can you say so? But we must be married to  
ve children — "

"Shall we be married, then? *I* want you to have my  
ildren."

He kissed her hand reverently. She pondered sadly,  
atching him.

"We are too young," she said at length.

"Twenty-four and twenty-three — "

"Not yet," she pleaded, as she rocked herself in  
stress.

"When you will," he said.

She bowed her head gravely. The tone of hopelessness  
which he said these things grieved her deeply. It had  
ways been a failure between them. Tacitly, she ac-  
iesced in what he felt.

And after a week of love he said to his mother sud-  
nly one Sunday night, just as they were going to bed:  
"I shan't go so much to Miriam's, mother."

She was surprised, but she would not ask him anything.

"You please yourself," she said.

So he went to bed. But there was a new quietness  
out him which she had wondered at. She almost  
essed. She would leave him alone, however. Pre-  
titation might spoil things. She watched him in his  
eliness, wondering where he would end. He was sick,  
much too quiet for him. There was a perpetual  
le knitting of his brows, such as she had seen when  
was a small baby, and which had been gone for many  
ars. Now it was the same again. And she could do  
thing for him. He had to go on alone, make his  
way.

He continued faithful to Miriam. For one day he had loved her utterly. But it never came again. The sense of failure grew stronger. At first it was only a sadness. Then he began to feel he could not go on. He wanted to run, to go abroad, anything. Gradually he ceased to ask her to have him. Instead of drawing them together it put them apart. And then he realized, conscious that it was no good. It was useless trying: it would never be a success between them.

For some months he had seen very little of Clara. They had occasionally walked out for half an hour at dinner-time. But he always reserved himself for Miriam. With Clara, however, his brow cleared, and he was happy again. She treated him indulgently, as if he were a child. He thought he did not mind. But deep below the surface it piqued him.

Sometimes Miriam said:

"What about Clara? I hear nothing of her lately."

"I walked with her about twenty minutes yesterday," he replied.

"And what did she talk about?"

"I don't know. I suppose I did all the jawing, as usual. I think I was telling her about the strike and how the women took it."

"Yes."

So he gave the account of himself.

But insidiously, without his knowing it, the war he felt for Clara drew him away from Miriam, for whom he felt responsible, and to whom he felt he belonged. He thought he was being quite faithful to her. It is easy to estimate exactly the strength and warmth of one's feelings for a woman till they have run away from one.

He began to give more time to his men friends. There was Jessop, at the Art School; Swain, who was chemistry demonstrator at the University; Newton, who was a teacher; besides Edgar and Miriam's younger brother. In his Pleading work, he sketched and studied with Jessop,

in the University for Swain, and the two went "vn town" together. Having come home in the train Newton, he called and had a game of billiards with in the Moon and Stars. If he gave to Miriam the se of his men friends, he felt quite justified. His er began to be relieved. He always told her where ad been.

uring the summer Clara wore sometimes a dress of cotton stuff with loose sleeves. When she lifted hands, her sleeves fell back, and her beautiful strong shone out.

"Half a minute," he cried. "Hold your arm still." e made sketches of her hand and arm, and the draw- contained some of the fascination the real thing had im. Miriam, who always went scrupulously through ooks and papers, saw the drawings.

"I think Clara has such beautiful arms," he said.

"Yes! When did you draw them?"

"On Tuesday, in the work-room. You know, I've a corner where I can work. Often I can do every e thing they need in the department, before dinner. I work for myself in the afternoon, and just see ings at night."

"Yes," she said, turning the leaves of his sketch-book. equestly he hated Miriam. He hated her as she bent ard and pored over his things. He hated her way atiently casting him up, as if he were an endless hological account. When he was with her, he hated for having got him, and yet not got him, and he red her. She took all and gave nothing, he said. east, she gave no living warmth. She was never , and giving off life. Looking for her was like look- or something which did not exist. She was only his cience, not his mate. He hated her violently, and more cruel to her. They dragged on till the next er. *He saw more and more of Clara.*

*last he spoke. He had been sitting working at hor ening. There was between him and his mothe*

peculiar condition of people frankly finding fault with each other. Mrs. Morel was strong on her feet again. He was not going to stick to Miriam. Very well; then she would stand aloof till he said something. It had been coming a long time, this bursting of the storm in him when he would come back to her. This evening there was between them a peculiar condition of suspense. He worked feverishly and mechanically, so that he could escape from himself. It grew late. Through the open door stealthily, came the scent of madonna lilies, almost as if it were prowling abroad. Suddenly he got up and went out of doors.

The beauty of the night made him want to shout. half-moon, dusky gold, was sinking behind the black sycamore at the end of the garden, making the sky deep purple with its glow. Nearer, a dim white fence of lilacs went across the garden, and the air all round seemed to stir with scent, as if it were alive. He went across the bed of pinks, whose keen perfume came sharply across the rocking, heavy scent of the lilies, and stood alongside the white barrier of flowers. They flagged all low as if they were panting. The scent made him drunk. He went down to the field to watch the moon sink under.

A corncrake in the hay-close called insistently. The moon slid quite quickly downwards, growing more flushed. Behind him the great flowers leaned as if they were calling. And then, like a shock, he caught another perfume, something raw and coarse. Hunting round, he found the purple iris, touched their fleshy throats and their dark, grasping hands. At any rate, he had found something. They stood stiff in the darkness. The scent was brutal. The moon was melting down upon the crest of the hill. It was gone; all was dark. The corncrake called still.

*Breaking off a pink, he suddenly went indoors.*

*"Come, my boy," said his mother. "I'm sure you went to bed."*

He stood with the pink against his lips.

"I shall break off with Miriam, mother," he answered calmly.

She looked up at him over her spectacles. He was staring back at her, unswerving. She met his eyes for a moment, then took off her glasses. He was white. The male was up in him, dominant. She did not want to see him too clearly.

"But I thought —" she began.

"Well," he answered, "I don't love her. I don't want to marry her — so I shall have done."

"But," exclaimed his mother, amazed, "I thought surely you had made up your mind to have her, and so said nothing."

"I had — I wanted to — but now I don't want. It's good. I shall break off on Sunday. I ought to, right n't I?"

"You know best. You know I said so long ago."

"I can't help that now. I shall break off on Sunday."

"Well," said his mother, "I think it will be best. But lately I decided you had made up your mind to have her, so I said nothing, and should have said nothing. But I say as I have always said, I *don't* think she is suited to you."

"On Sunday I break off," he said, smelling the pink. He put the flower in his mouth. Unthinking, he bared his teeth, closed them on the blossom slowly, and had a mouthful of petals. These he spat into the fire, kissed his mother, and went to bed.

On Sunday he went up to the farm in the early afternoon. He had written Miriam that they would walk over the fields to Hucknall. His mother was very tender with him. He said nothing. But she saw the effort it was costing. The peculiar set look on his face stilled her.

"Never mind, my son," she said. "You will be so much better when it is all over."

*Paul glanced swiftly at his mother in surprise and entment. He did not want sympathy.*

Miriam met him at the lane-end. She was wearing new dress of figured muslin that had short sleeves. The short sleeves, and Miriam's brown-skinned arms beneath them — such pitiful, resigned arms — gave him some pain that they helped to make him cruel. She had made herself look so beautiful and fresh for him. She seemed to blossom for him alone. Every time he looked at her — a mature young woman now, and beautiful in her dress — it hurt so much that his heart seemed almost to burst with the restraint he put on it. But he decided, and it was irrevocable.

On the hills they sat down, and he lay with his head on her lap, whilst she fingered his hair. She knew that "he was not there," as she put it. Often, when she had been with her, she looked for him, and could not find him. But this afternoon she was not prepared.

It was nearly five o'clock when he told her. They were sitting on the bank of a stream, where the lip of the bank hung over a hollow bank of yellow earth, and he was hacking away with a stick, as he did when he was tortured and cruel.

"I have been thinking," he said, "we ought to break off."

"Why?" she cried in surprise.

"Because it's no good going on."

"Why is it no good?"

"It is n't. I don't want to marry. I don't want to marry. And if we're not going to marry, it's good going on."

"But why do you say this now?"

"Because I've made up my mind."

"And what about these last months, and the things you told me then?"

"I can't help it; I don't want to go on."

"You don't want any more of me?"

"I want us to break off — you be free of me, I be free of you."

"And what about these last months?"

"I don't know. I've not told you anything but what thought was true."

"Then why are you different now?"

"I'm not—I'm the same—only I know it's no good going on."

"You have n't told me why it's no good."

"Because I don't want to go on—and I don't want to marry."

"How many times have you offered to marry me, and would n't?"

"I know; but I want us to break off."

There was silence for a moment or two, while he dug viciously at the earth. She bent her head, pondering. He was an unreasonable child. He was like an infant which, when it has drunk its fill, throws away and smashes the cup. She looked at him, feeling she could get hold of him and *wring* some consistency out of him. But she was helpless. Then she cried:

"I have said you were only fourteen—you are only *our!*"

He still dug at the earth viciously. He heard.

"You are a child of four," she repeated in her anger.

He did not answer, but said in his heart: "All right; if I'm a child of four, what do you want me for? I don't want another mother." But he said nothing to her, and there was silence.

"And have you told your people?" she asked.

"I have told my mother."

There was another long interval of silence.

"Then what do you *want?*" she asked.

"Why, I want us to separate. We have lived on each other all these years; now let us stop. I will go my own way without you, and you will go your way without me. You will have an independent life of your own."

*There was in it some truth that, in spite of her bitterness, she could not help registering. She knew she*

in a sort of bondage to him, which she hated because she could not control it. She had hated her love for him from the moment it grew too strong for her. And deep down, she had hated him because she loved him and he dominated her. She had resisted his domination. She had fought to keep herself free of him in the last issue. And she was free of him, even more than he of her.

"And," he continued, "we shall always be more or less each other's work. You have done a lot for me I for you. Now let us start and live by ourselves."

"What do you want to do?" she asked.

"Nothing — only be free," he answered.

She, however, knew in her heart that Clara's influence was over him to liberate him. But she said nothing.

"And what have I to tell my mother?" she asked.

"I told my mother," he answered, "that I was breaking off — clean and altogether."

"I shall not tell them at home," she said.

Frowning, "You please yourself," he said.

He knew he had landed her in a nasty hole, and was leaving her in the lurch. It angered him.

"Tell them you would n't and won't marry me, we have broken off," he said. "It's true enough."

She bit her finger moodily. She thought over the whole affair. She had known it would come to this, she had seen it all along. It chimed with her bitter expectation.

"Always — it has always been so!" she cried. "It has been one long battle between us — you fighting away from me."

It came from her unawares, like a flash of lightning. The man's heart stood still. Was this how she saw it?

"But we've had *some* perfect hours, *some* perfect times, when we were together!" he pleaded.

"Never!" she cried; "never! It has always been you fighting me off."

"Not always — not at first!" he pleaded.

"Always, from the very beginning—always the me!"

She had finished, but she had done enough. He sat ghast. He had wanted to say, "It has been good, but is at an end." And she—she whose love he had believed in when he had despised himself—denied that their love had ever been love. "He had always fought way from her?" Then it had been monstrous. There had never been anything really between them; all the time he had been imagining something where there was nothing. And she had known. She had known so much, and had told him so little. She had known all the time. All the time this was at the bottom of her!

He sat silent in bitterness. At last the whole affair appeared in a cynical aspect to him. She had really layed with him, not he with her. She had hidden all her condemnation from him, had flattered him, and despised him. She despised him now. He grew intellectual and cruel.

"You ought to marry a man who worships you," he said; "then you could do as you liked with him. Plenty of men will worship you, if you get on the private side of their natures. You ought to marry one such. They could never fight you off."

"Thank you!" she said. "But don't advise me to marry someone else any more. You've done it before."

"Very well," he said; "I will say no more."

He sat still, feeling as if he had had a blow, instead of giving one. Their eight years of friendship and love, the eight years of his life, were nullified.

"When did you think of this?" she asked.

"I thought definitely on Thursday night."

"I knew it was coming," she said.

That pleased him bitterly. "Oh, very well! If she knew, then it does n't come as a surprise to her," he ought.

"And have you said anything to Clara?" she asked.  
"No; but I shall tell her now."

There was a silence.

"Do you remember the things you said this time last year, in my grandmother's house — nay, last month even?"

"Yes," he said; "I do! And I meant them! I can't help that it's failed."

"It has failed because you want something else."

"It would have failed whether or not. You never believed in me."

She laughed strangely.

He sat in silence. He was full of a feeling that she had deceived him. She had despised him when he thought she worshipped him. She had let him say wrong things and had not contradicted him. She had let him figure alone. But it stuck in his throat that she had despised him whilst he thought she worshipped him. She should have told him when she found fault with him. She had not played fair. He hated her. All these years she had treated him as if he were a hero, and thought of him secretly as an infant, a foolish child. Then why had she left the foolish child to his folly? His heart was hard against her.

She sat full of bitterness. She had known — oh, she had known! All the time he was away from her she had summed him up, seen his littleness, his meanness, his folly. Even she had guarded her soul against him. She was not overthrown, nor prostrated, not even much hurt. She had known. Only why, as he sat there, did he still this strange dominance over her? His movements fascinated her as if she were hypnotized by him. Yet he was despicable, false, inconsistent, mean. Why this bondage for her? Why was it that the movement of his arm stirred her as nothing else in the world could? Why was she fastened to him? Why, now, if he looked at her and commanded her, would she have to obey? She would obey him in his trifling commands. But once he was obeyed, then she had lost her power, she knew, to lead him where she would.

as sure of herself. Only, this new influence! Ah, he was not a man! He was a baby that cries for the newest toy. And all the attachment of his soul would not keep him. Very well, he would have to go. But he would come back when he had tired of his new sensation.

He hacked at the earth till she was fretted to death. She rose. He sat flinging lumps of earth in the stream.

"We will go and have tea here?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered.

They chattered over irrelevant subjects during tea. He held forth on the love of ornament — the cottage parlour moved him thereto — and its connection with aesthetics. She was cold and quiet. As they walked home, he asked:

"And we shall not see each other?"

"No — or rarely," he answered.

"Nor write?" she asked, almost sarcastically.

"As you will," he answered. "We're not strangers — never should be, whatever happened. I will write to you now and again. You please yourself."

"I see!" she answered cuttingly.

But he was at that stage at which nothing else hurts. He had made a great cleavage in his life. He had had a great shock when she told him their love had been always a conflict. Nothing more mattered. If it never had been much, there was no need to make a fuss that it was ended.

He left her at the lane-end. As she went home, solitary, in her new frock, having her people to face at the other end, he stood still with shame and pain in the highroad, thinking of the suffering he caused her.

In a reaction towards restoring his self-esteem, he went into the Willow Tree for a drink. There were four girls who had been out for the day, drinking a modest glass of port. They had some chocolates on the table. Paul sat near with his whisky. He noticed the girls whispering and nudging. Presently one, a bonny dark hued woman, said:

"Have a chocolate?"

The others laughed loudly at her impudence.

"All right," said Paul. "Give me a hard one — I don't like creams."

"Here you are, then," said the girl; "here's almond for you."

She held the sweet between her fingers. He opened his mouth. She popped it in, and blushed.

"You are nice!" he said.

"Well," she answered, "we thought you looked overcast, and they dared me offer you a chocolate."

"I don't mind if I have another — another sort," said.

And presently they were all laughing together.

It was nine o'clock when he got home, falling dark. He entered the house in silence. His mother, who had been waiting, rose anxiously.

"I told her," he said.

"I'm glad," replied the mother, with great relief.

He hung up his cap wearily.

"I said we'd have done altogether," he said.

"That's right, my son," said the mother. "It's hard for her now, but best in the long-run. I know. You were n't suited for her."

He laughed shakily as he sat down.

"I've had such a lark with some girls in a pub," he said.

His mother looked at him. He had forgotten Miriam now. He told her about the girls in the Willow Tree. Mrs. Morel looked at him. It seemed unreal, his gaiety. At the back of it was too much horror and misery.

"Now have some supper," she said very gently.

Afterwards he said wistfully:

"She never thought she'd have me, mother, not from the first, and so she's not disappointed."

"I'm afraid," said his mother, "she does n't give hopes of you yet."

"No," he said, "perhaps not."

"You 'll find it 's better to have done," she said.

"I don't know," he said desperately.

"Well, leave her alone," replied his mother.

So he left her, and she was alone. Very few people cared for her, and she for very few people. She remained alone with herself, waiting.

## CHAPTER XII

### PASSION

HE was gradually making it possible to earn a livelihood by his art. Liberty's had taken several of his painted designs on various stuffs, and he could sell designs for embroideries, for altar-cloths, and similar things, in one or two places. It was not very much he made at present, but he might extend it. He also had made friends with the designer for a pottery firm, and was gaining some knowledge of his new acquaintance's art. The applied arts interested him very much. At the same time he laboured slowly at his pictures. He loved to paint large figures full of light, but not merely made up of lights and cast shadows, like the impressionists; rather definite figures that had a certain luminous quality, like some of Michael Angelo's people. And these he fitted into a landscape, in what he thought true proportion. He worked a great deal from memory, using everybody he knew. He believed firmly in his work, that it was good and valuable. In spite of fits of depression, shrinking, everything, he believed in his work.

He was twenty-four when he said his first confident thing to his mother.

"Mother," he said, "I s'll make a painter that they'll attend to."

She sniffed in her quaint fashion. It was like a half pleased shrug of the shoulders.

"Very well, my boy, we 'll see," she said.

"You shall see, my pigeon! You see if you're a swanky one of these days!"

"I'm quite content, my boy," she smiled.

"But you 'll have to alter. Look at you with Min-

Minnie was the small servant, a girl of fourteen.

"And what about Minnie?" asked Mrs. Morel, with gravity.

I heard her this morning: 'Eh, Mrs. Morel! I was going to do that,' when you went out in the rain for some time," he said. "That looks a lot like your being able to manage servants!"

"Well, it was only the child's niceness," said Mrs. Morel.

"And you apologizing to her: 'You can't do two things at once, can you?'"

"She was busy washing up," replied Mrs. Morel.

"And what did she say? 'It could easily have waited a moment. Now look how your feet paddle!'"

"Yes — brazen young baggage!" said Mrs. Morel, smiling.

He looked at his mother, laughing. She was quite warm and rosy again with love of him. It seemed as if the sunshine were on her for a moment. He continued his work gladly. She seemed so well when she was happy that he forgot her grey hair.

And that year she went with him to the Isle of Wight for a holiday. It was too exciting for them both, and too beautiful. Mrs. Morel was full of joy and wonder. But he would have her walk with him more than she was able. She had a bad fainting bout. So grey her face was, so white her mouth! It was agony to him. He felt as if someone were pushing a knife in his chest. Then she was better again, and he forgot. But the anxiety remained beside him, like a wound that did not close.

After leaving Miriam he went almost straight to Clara. On the Monday following the day of the rupture he went down to the work-room. She looked up at him and smiled. They had grown very intimate unawares. She saw a new brightness about him.

"Well, Queen of Sheba!" he said, laughing.

"But why?" she asked.

"I think it suits you. You've got a new frock on."

She flushed, asking:

“ And what of it? ”

“ Suits you — awfully! I could design you a

“ How would it be? ”

He stood in front of her, his eyes glittering as he bounded. He kept her eyes fixed with his. Then suddenly he took hold of her. She half started back, drew the stuff of her blouse tighter, smoothed it over her breast.

“ More so! ” he explained.

But they were both of them flaming with blushes; immediately he ran away. He had touched her, and the whole body was quivering with the sensation.

There was already a sort of secret understanding between them. The next evening he went into the cinema with her for a few minutes before train-time. When they sat, he saw her hand lying near him. For a few moments he dared not touch it. The pictures dithered. Then he took her hand in his. It was warm and firm; it filled his grasp. He held it fast. She moved nor made any sign. When they came out he was due. He hesitated.

“ Good-night,” she said. He darted away across the road.

The next day he came again, talking to her, rather superior with him.

“ Shall we go a walk on Monday? ” he asked.

She turned her face aside.

“ Shall you tell Miriam? ” she replied sarcastically.

“ I have broken off with her, ” he said.

“ When? ”

“ Last Sunday.”

“ You quarrelled? ”

“ No! I had made up my mind. I told her quite definitely I should consider myself free.”

Clara did not answer, and he returned to his room.

*She was so quiet and so superb!*

*On the Saturday evening he asked her to*

rink coffee with him in a restaurant, meeting him after  
ork was over. She came, looking very reserved and very  
stant. He had three-quarters of an hour to train-time.

"We will walk a little while," he said.

She agreed, and they went past the Castle into the  
ark. He was afraid of her. She walked moodily at his  
ide, with a kind of resentful, reluctant, angry walk. He  
was afraid to take her hand.

"Which way shall we go?" he asked as they walked in  
darkness.

"I don't mind."

"Then we'll go up the steps."

He suddenly turned round. They had passed the Park  
steps. She stood still in resentment at his suddenly  
abandoning her. He looked for her. She stood aloof.  
He caught her suddenly in his arms, held her strained  
for a moment, kissed her. Then he let her go.

"Come along," he said, penitent.

She followed him. He took her hand and kissed her  
finger-tips. They went in silence. When they came to the  
ight, he let go her hand. Neither spoke till they reached  
the station. Then they looked each other in the eyes.

"Good-night," she said.

And he went for his train. His body acted mechani-  
cally. People talked to him. He heard faint echoes  
answering them. He was in a delirium. He felt that he  
would go mad if Monday did not come at once. On  
Monday he would see her again. All himself was pitched  
there, ahead. Sunday intervened. He could not bear it.  
He could not see her till Monday. And Sunday intervened  
— hour after hour of tension. He wanted to beat his  
head against the door of the carriage. But he sat still.  
He drank some whisky on the way home, but it only made  
it worse. His mother must not be upset, that was all.  
He dissembled, and got quickly to bed. There he sat  
*dressed, with his chin on his knees, staring out of the*  
*window at the far hill, with its few lights. He neither*  
*walked nor slept, but sat perfectly still, staring.*

He laughed.

"Do you feel like a blot of vermillion walking down the street!" he said.

She hung her head, afraid of the people they met. They looked sideways at her as they walked. There was a wonderful close down on her face near the ear that he wanted to touch. And a certain heaviness, the heaviness of a very full ear of corn that dips slightly in the wind, that there was about her, made his brain spin. He seemed to be spinning down the street, everything going round.

As they sat in the tramcar, she leaned her heavy shoulder against him, and he took her hand. He felt himself coming round from the anaesthetic, beginning to breathe. Her ear, half hidden among her blonde hair, was near him. The temptation to kiss it was almost too great. But there were other people on top of the car. It still remained to him to kiss it. After all, he was not himself, he was some attribute of hers, like the sunshine that fell on her.

He looked quickly away. It had been raining. The big bluff of the Castle rock was streaked with rain, it reared above the flat of the town. They crossed the wide, black space of the Midland Railway, and passed the cattle enclosure that stood out white. Then they went down sordid Wilford Road.

She rocked slightly to the tram's motion, and as she leaned against him, rocked upon him. He was a vigorous slender man, with exhaustless energy. His face was rough with rough-hewn features, like the common people's; his eyes under the deep brows were so full of life that they fascinated her. They seemed to dance, and yet they were still, trembling on the finest balance of laughter. His mouth the same was just going to spring into a laugh of triumph, yet did not. There was a sharp suspicion about him. She bit her lip moodily. His hand was hard clenched over hers.

They paid their two halfpennies at the turnstile, crossed the bridge. The Trent was very full, W

at and insidious under the bridge, travelling in a soft  
y. There had been a great deal of rain. On the  
r levels were flat gleams of flood water. The sky  
grey, with glisten of silver here and there. In Wilford  
tchyard the dahlias were sodden with rain — wet  
eak-crimson balls. No one was on the path that  
t along the green river meadow, along the elm-tree  
nnade.

There was the faintest haze over the silvery-dark  
the green meadow-banks, and the elm-trees  
ngled with gold. The river slid by in a bod  
nt and swift, intertwining among itself like so  
plex creature. Clara walked moodily beside  
“ Why,” she asked at length, in rather a jarri...  
lid you leave Miriam? ”

He frowned.

“ Because I wanted to leave her,” he said.

“ Why? ”

“ Because I did n’t want to go on with her. And I  
d n’t want to marry.”

She was silent for a moment. They picked their way  
wn the muddy path. Drops of water fell from the elm-  
ees.

“ You did n’t want to marry Miriam, or you did n’t  
nt to marry at all? ” she asked.

“ Both,” he answered — “ both! ”

They had to manœuvre to get to the stile, because of  
e pools of water.

“ And what did she say? ” Clara asked.

“ Miriam? She said I was a baby of four, and that I  
ways had battled her off.”

Clara pondered over this for a time.

“ But you have really been going with her for some  
ne? ” she asked.

“ Yes.”

“ And now you don’t want any more of her? ”

“ No. I know it’s no good.”

She pondered again.

"Don't you think you've treated her rather badly?" she asked.

"Yes; I ought to have dropped it years back. But there would have been no good going on. Two wrongs don't make a right."

"How old *are* you?" Clara asked.

"Twenty-five."

"And I am thirty," she said.

"I know you are."

"I shall be thirty-one — or *am* I thirty-one?"

"I neither know nor care. What does it matter!"

They were at the entrance to the Grove. The wet track, already sticky with fallen leaves, went up the steep bank between the grass. On either side stood the elm trees like pillars along a great aisle, arching over and making high up a roof from which the dead leaves fell. All was empty and silent and wet. She stood on top of the stile, and he held both her hands. Laughing, he looked down into his eyes. Then she leaped. Her breasts came against his; he held her, and covered her face with kisses.

They went on up the slippery, steep red path. Presently she released his hand and put it round his waist.

"You press the vein in my arm, holding it so tightly," she said.

They walked along. His finger-tips felt the rocking of her breast. All was silent and deserted. On the left the red wet plough-land showed through the doorways between the elm-boles and their branches. On the right looking down, they could see the tree-tops of elms growing far beneath them, hear occasionally the gurgle of the river. Sometimes there below they caught glimpses of the full, soft-sliding Trent, and of water-meadows dotted with small cattle.

"It has scarcely altered since little Kirke White used to come," he said.

But he was watching her throat below the ear,

flush was fusing into the honey-white, and her mouth pouted disconsolate. She stirred against him as she said, and his body was like a taut string.

Half-way up the big colonnade of elms, where the trees rose highest above the river, their forward movement faltered to an end. He led her across to the grass, under the trees at the edge of the path. The cliff of red earth sloped swiftly down, through trees and bushes, to the river that glimmered and was dark between the foliage. The far-below water-meadows were very green. He and she stood leaning against one another, silent, afraid, their bodies touching all along. There came a quick gurgle in the river below.

"Why," he asked at length, "did you hate Baxter wes?"

She turned to him with a splendid movement. Her mouth was offered him, and her throat; her eyes were half shut; her breast was tilted as if it asked for him. He flashed with a small laugh, shut his eyes, and met her with a long, whole kiss. Her mouth fused with his; their bodies were sealed and annealed. It was some minutes before they withdrew. They were standing beside the public path.

"Will you go down to the river?" he asked.

She looked at him, leaving herself in his hands. He went over the brim of the declivity and began to climb down.

"It is slippery," he said.

"Never mind," she replied.

The red clay went down almost sheer. He slid, went from one tuft of grass to the next, hanging on to the bushes, making for a little platform at the foot of a tree. There he waited for her, laughing with excitement. Her feet were clogged with red earth. It was hard for her. He frowned. At last he caught her hand, and she stood beside him. The cliff rose above them and fell away below. Her colour was up, her eyes flashed. He looked at the big drop below them.

"It's risky," he said; "or messy, at any rate. ~~So~~ we go back?"

"Not for my sake," she said quickly.

"All right. You see, I can't help you; I should ~~not~~ hinder. Give me that little parcel and your gloves. ~~So~~ poor shoes!"

They stood perched on the face of the declivity, ~~so~~ the trees.

"Well, I'll go again," he said.

Away he went, slipping, staggering, sliding to the tree, into which he fell with a slam that nearly shook breath out of him. She came after cautiously, hanging on to the twigs and grasses. So they descended, stage by stage, to the river's brink. There, to his disgust, the bank had eaten away the path, and the red decline ran straight into the water. He dug in his heels and brought himself up violently. The string of the parcel broke with a snap; the brown parcel bounded down, leaped into the water, and sailed smoothly away. He hung on to his tree.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he cried crossly. Then he laughed. She was coming perilously down.

"Mind!" he warned her. He stood with his back to the tree, waiting. "Come now," he called, opening his arms.

She let herself run. He caught her, and together they stood watching the dark water scoop at the raw edge of the bank. The parcel had sailed out of sight.

"It does n't matter," she said.

He held her close and kissed her. There was only room for their four feet.

"It's a swindle!" he said. "But there's a rut where a man has been, so if we go on I guess we shall find the path again."

The river slid and twined its great volume. On the other bank cattle were feeding on the desolate flats. The cliff rose high above Paul and Clara on their right hand. They stood against the tree in the watery silence.

"Let us try going forward," he said; and they set

In the red clay along the groove a man's nailed  
ts had made. They were hot and flushed. Their  
cked shoes hung heavy on their steps. At last they  
nd the broken path. It was littered with rubble from  
water, but at any rate it was easier. They cleaned  
r boots with twigs. His heart was beating thick and  
.

uddenly, coming on to the little level, he saw two fig-  
s of men standing silent at the water's edge. His  
t leaped. They were fishing. He turned and put his  
d up warningly to Clara. She hesitated, buttoned her  
t. The two went on together.

The fishermen turned curiously to watch the two in-  
ders on their privacy and solitude. They had had a  
but it was nearly out. All kept perfectly still. The  
turned again to their fishing, stood over the grey  
ting river like statues. Clara went with bowed head,  
ing; he was laughing to himself. Directly they  
sed out of sight behind the willows.

"Now they ought to be drowned," said Paul softly.  
lara did not answer. They toiled forward along a tiny  
h on the river's lip. Suddenly it vanished. The bank  
sheer red solid clay in front of them, sloping straight  
the river. He stood and cursed beneath his breath,  
ing his teeth.

"It is impossible!" said Clara.

He stood erect, looking round. Just ahead were two  
ts in the stream, covered with osiers. But they were  
ittainable. The cliff came down like a sloping wall  
m far above their heads. Behind, not far back, were  
fishermen. Across the river the distant cattle fed  
ntly in the desolate afternoon. He cursed again deeply  
der his breath. He gazed up the great steep bank.  
s there no hope but to scale back to the public path?  
"Stop a minute," he said, and, digging his heels side-  
ys into the steep bank of red clay, he began nimbly  
ount. He looked across at every tree-foot. At las  
ound what he wanted. Two beech-trees side by si

on the hill held a little level on the upper face between their roots. It was littered with damp leaves, but it would do. The fishermen were perhaps sufficiently out of sight. He threw down his rainproof and waved to her to come.

She toiled to his side. Arriving there, she looked at him heavily, dumbly, and laid her head on his shoulder. He held her fast as he looked round. They were safe enough from all but the small, lonely cows over the river. He sunk his mouth on her throat, where he felt her heart pulse beat under his lips. Everything was perfectly still. There was nothing in the afternoon but themselves.

When she arose, he, looking on the ground all the time, saw suddenly sprinkled on the black, wet beech-roots many scarlet carnation petals, like splashed drops of blood; red, small splashes fell from her bosom, streaming down her dress to her feet.

"Your flowers are smashed," he said.

She looked at him heavily as she put back her hair. Suddenly he put his finger-tips on her cheek.

"Why dost look so heavy?" he reproached her.

She smiled sadly, as if she felt alone in herself, caressed her cheek with his fingers, and kissed her.

"Nay!" he said. "Never thee bother!"

She gripped his fingers tight, and laughed shakily. Then she dropped her hand. He put the hair back from her brows, stroking her temples, kissing them lightly.

"But tha shouldna worrit!" he said softly, pleading.

"No, I don't worry!" she laughed tenderly and resigned.

"Yea, tha does! Dunna thee worrit," he implored, caressing.

"No!" she consoled him, kissing him.

They had a stiff climb to get to the top again. It took them a quarter of an hour. When he got on to the grass, he threw off his cap, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and sighed.

"Now we're back at the ordinary level," he said.

She sat down, panting, on the tussocky grass. Her cheeks were flushed pink. He kissed her, and she gave a cry to joy.

"And now I'll clean thy boots and make thee fit for respectable folk," he said.

He kneeled at her feet, worked away with a stick and bits of grass. She put her fingers in his hair, drew his head to her, and kissed it.

"What am I supposed to be doing," he said, looking at her laughing; "cleaning shoes or dibbling with love? Answer me that!"

"Just whichever I please," she replied.

"I'm your boot-boy for the time being, and nothing else!" But they remained looking into each other's eyes, laughing. Then they kissed with little nibbling kisses. "T-t-t-t!" he went with his tongue, like his mother. "Tell you, nothing gets done when there's a woman about."

And he returned to his boot-cleaning, singing softly. He touched his thick hair, and he kissed her fingers. He worked away at her shoes. At last they were quite sensible.

"There you are, you see!" he said. "Are n't I a great hand at restoring you to respectability? Stand up! Here, you look as irreproachable as Britannia herself!" He cleaned his own boots a little, washed his hands in a puddle, and sang. They went on into Clifton village. She was madly in love with her; every movement she made, every crease in her garments, sent a hot flush through him and seemed adorable.

The old lady at whose house they had tea was roused from gaiety by them.

"I could wish you'd had something of a better day," she said, hovering round.

"Nay!" he laughed. "We've been saying how nice it is."

*The old lady looked at him curiously. There was a familiar glow and charm about him. His eyes were dark,*

and laughing. He rubbed his moustache with movement.

"Have you been saying *so!*?" she exclaimed rousing in her old eyes.

"Truly!" he laughed.

"Then I'm sure the day's good enough," said lady. She fussed about, and did not want to leave.

"I don't know whether you'd like some radish well," she said to Clara; "but I've got some in den — *and* a cucumber."

Clara flushed. She looked very handsome.

"I should like some radishes," she answered. And the old lady pottered off gleefully.

"If she knew!" said Clara quietly to him.

"Well, she does n't know; and it shows we're ourselves, at any rate. You look quite enough to be an archangel, and I'm sure I feel harmless — so makes you look nice, and makes folk happy when we have us, and makes us happy — why, we're not them out of much!"

They went on with the meal. When they were away, the old lady came timidly with three tiny boxes in full blow, neat as bees, and speckled scarlet and gold. She stood before Clara, pleased with herself, saying,

"I don't know whether —" and holding the boxes forward in her old hand.

"Oh, how pretty!" cried Clara, accepting the boxes.

"Shall she have them all?" asked Paul reproachfully of the old woman.

"Yes, she shall have them all," she replied, with joy. "You have got enough for your share."

"Ah, but I shall ask her to give me one!" he said.

"Then she does as she pleases," said the old woman, smiling. And she bobbed a little curtsey of thanks.

Clara was rather quiet and uncomfortable. "I was walking along," he said:

"You don't feel criminal, do you?"  
She looked at him with startled grey eyes.

"Criminal!" she said. "No."

"But you seem to feel you have done a wrong?"

"No," she said. "I only think, 'If they knew!'"

"If they knew, they'd cease to understand. As it is, they do understand, and they like it. What do they matter? Here, with only the trees and me, you don't feel the least bit wrong, do you?"

He took her by the arm, held her facing him, holding her eyes with his. Something fretted him.

"Not sinners, are we?" he said, with an uneasy little shiver.

"No," she replied.

He kissed her, laughing.

"You like your little bit of guiltiness, I believe," he said. "I believe Eve enjoyed it, when she went cowering out of Paradise."

But there was a certain glow and quietness about her that made him glad. When he was alone in the railway-carriage, he found himself tumultuously happy, and the people exceedingly nice, and the night lovely, and everything good.

Mrs. Morel was sitting reading when he got home. Her health was not good now, and there had come that ivory pallor into her face which he never noticed, and which afterwards he never forgot. She did not mention her own ill-health to him. After all, she thought, it was not much.

"You are late!" she said, looking at him.

His eyes were shining; his face seemed to glow. He smiled to her.

"Yes; I've been down Clifton Grove with Clara."

His mother looked at him again.

"But won't people talk?" she said.

"Why? They know she's a suffragette, and so on, and what if they do talk!"

"Of course, there may be nothing wrong in it," said his mother. "But you know what folk are, and if one gets talked about — "

"Well, I can't help it. Their jaw is n't so almighty important, after all."

"I think you ought to consider *her*."

"So I do! What can people say? — that we take walk together. I believe you're jealous."

"You know I should be *glad* if she were n't a married woman."

"Well, my dear, she lives separate from her husband and talks on platforms; so she's already singled out from the sheep, and, as far as I can see, has n't much to lose. No; her life's nothing to her, so what's the worth of nothing? She goes with me — it becomes something. Then she must pay — we both must pay! Folk are frightened of paying; they'd rather starve and die."

"Very well, my son. We'll see how it will end."

"Very well, my mother. I'll abide by the end."

"We'll see!"

"And she's — she's *awfully* nice, mother; she is really You don't know!"

"That's not the same as marrying her."

"It's perhaps better."

There was a silence for a while. He wanted to ask his mother something, but was afraid.

"Should you like to know her?" He hesitated.

"Yes," said Mrs. Morel coolly. "I should like to know what she's like."

"But she's nice, mother, she is! And not a bit common!"

"I never suggested she was."

"But you seem to think she's — not as good as — She's better than ninety-nine folk out of a hundred, I tell you! She's *better*, she is! She's fair, she's honest, she's straight! There is n't anything underhand or supercilious about her. Don't be mean about her!"

Mrs. Morel flushed.

"I am sure I am not mean about her. She may quite as you say, but —"

"You don't approve," he finished.

"And do you expect me to?" she answered coldly.

"Yes!—yes!—if you'd anything about you, you'd glad! Do you want to see her?"

"I said I did."

"Then I'll bring her — shall I bring her here?"

"You please yourself."

"Then I will bring her here — one Sunday — to tea. You think a horrid thing about her, I shan't forgive you."

His mother laughed.

"As if it would make any difference!" she said. He knew he had won.

"Oh, but it feels so fine, mother, when she's there! She's such a queen in her way."

Occasionally he still walked a little way from chapel to Miriam and Edgar. He did not go up to the farm.

He, however, was very much the same with him, and he did not feel embarrassed in her presence. One evening he was alone when he accompanied her. They began by

reading books; it was their unfailing topic. Mrs. Morel

said that his and Miriam's affair was like a fire fed

books—if there were no more volumes it would die.

Miriam, for her part, boasted that she could read a book like a book, could place her finger any minute on the chapter and the line. He, easily taken in, believed that Miriam knew more about him than anyone else. So it caused him to talk to her about himself, like the simplest artist. Very soon the conversation drifted to his own feelings. It flattered him immensely that he was of such supreme interest.

"And what have you been doing lately?"

"I—oh, not much! I made a sketch of Bestwood from the garden, that is nearly right at last. It's the hundredth try."

So they went on. Then she said:

"You've not been out, then, lately?"

"Yes; I went up Clifton Grove on Monday afternoon with Clara."

"It was not very nice weather," said Miriam, "was it?"

"But I wanted to go out, and it was all right. 'Trent is full."

"And did you go to Barton?" she asked.

"No; we had tea in Clifton."

"Did you! That would be nice."

"It was! The jolliest old woman! She gave us  
several pom-pom dahlias, as pretty as you like."

Miriam bowed her head and brooded. He was quite  
conscious of concealing anything from her.

"What made her give them you?" she asked.

He laughed.

"Because she liked us — because we were jolly, I sh  
think."

Miriam put her finger in her mouth.

"Were you late home?" she asked.

At last he resented her tone.

"I caught the seven-thirty."

"Ha!"

They walked on in silence, and he was angry.

"And how is Clara?" asked Miriam.

"Quite all right, I think."

"That's good!" she said, with a tinge of irony. "the way, what of her husband? One never hears anyt  
of him."

"He's got some other woman, and is also quite  
right," he replied. "At least, so I think."

"I see — you don't know for certain. Don't you t  
a position like that is hard on a woman?"

"Rottenly hard!"

"It's so unjust!" said Miriam. "The man does  
likes —"

"Then let the woman also," he said.

"How can she? And if she does, look at her positio

"What of it?"

"Why, it's impossible! You don't understand  
a woman forfeits —"

"No, I don't. But if a woman's got nothing'

'ame to feed on, why, it's thin tack, and a donkey I die of it!"

she understood his moral attitude, at least, and she he would act accordingly.

e never asked him anything direct, but she got to enough.

other day, when he saw Miriam, the conversation d to marriage, then to Clara's marriage with Dawes. You see," he said, "she never knew the fearful im- nce of marriage. She thought it was all in the day's i — it would have to come — and Dawes — well, a many women would have given their souls to get so why not him? Then she developed into the e *incomprise*, and treated him badly, I'll bet my ."

nd she left him because he did n't understand ,

suppose so. I suppose she had to. It is n't alto- r a question of understanding; it's a question of . With him, she was only half alive; the rest was ant, deadened. And the dormant woman was the e *incomprise*, and she *had* to be awakened."

nd what about him?"

don't know. I rather think he loves her as much can, but he 's a fool."

t was something like your mother and father," said m.

Yes; but my mother, I believe, got *real* joy and satis- on out of my father at first. I believe she had a on for him; that 's why she stayed with him. After ey were bound to each other."

Yes," said Miriam.

That 's what one *must have*, I think," he continued — real, real flame of feeling through another person ce, only once, if it only lasts three months. See, other looks as if she 'd *had* everything that was ry for her living and developing. There 's not t of a feeling of sterility about her."

"No," said Miriam.

"And with my father, at first, I'm sure she had the ~~no~~ thing. She knows; she has been there. You can feel about her, and about him, and about hundreds of people you meet every day; and, once it has happened to you, you can go on with anything and ripen."

"What has happened, exactly?" asked Miriam.

"It's so hard to say, but the something big and intense that changes you when you really come together with somebody else. It almost seems to fertilize your soul and make it that you can go on and mature."

"And you think your mother had it with your father?"

"Yes; and at the bottom she feels grateful to him for giving it her, even now, though they are miles apart."

"And you think Clara never had it?"

"I'm sure."

Miriam pondered this. She saw what he was seeking — a sort of baptism of fire in passion, it seemed to her. She realized that he would never be satisfied till he had it. Perhaps it was essential to him, as to some men, to sow wild oats; and afterwards, when he was satisfied, he would not rage with restlessness any more, but could settle down and give her his life into her hands. Well, then, he must go, let him go and have his fill — something big and intense, he called it. At any rate, when he had got it, he would not want it — that he said himself; he would want the other thing that she could give him. He would want to be owned, so that he could work. It seemed to her a bitter thing that he must go, but she could let him go into an inn for a glass of whisky, so she could let him go to Clara, so long as it was something that would satisfy a need in him, and leave him free for herself to possess.

"Have you told your mother about Clara?" she asked.

She knew this would be a test of the seriousness of his feeling for the other woman; she knew he was going to Clara for something vital, not as a man goes for pleasure to a prostitute, if he told his mother.

"Yes," he said, "and she is coming to tea on Sunday."

"To your house?"

"Yes; I want mother to see her."

"Ah!"

d

a.

There was a silence. Things had gone quicker than I thought. She felt a sudden bitterness that he could leave so soon and so entirely. And was Clara to be accepted by his people, who had been so hostile to her? "I may call in as I go to chapel," she said. "It is long time since I saw Clara."

"Very well," he said, astonished, and unconsciously angry.

On the Sunday afternoon he went to Keston to meet Clara at the station. As he stood on the platform he was trying to examine in himself if he had a premonition.

"Do I feel as if she'd come?" he said to himself, and he tried to find out. His heart felt queer and contracted. That seemed like foreboding. Then he *had* a foreboding she would not come! Then she would not come, and instead of taking her over the fields home, as he had imagined, he would have to go alone. The train was late; the afternoon would be wasted, and the evening. He hated her for not coming. Why had she promised, then, if she could not keep her promise? Perhaps she had missed her train — he himself was always missing trains — but that was no reason why she should miss this particular one. He was angry with her; he was furious.

Suddenly he saw the train crawling, sneaking round the corner. Here, then, was the train, but of course she had not come. The green engine hissed along the platform, the row of brown carriages drew up, several doors opened. No; she had not come! No! Yes; ah, there she was! She had a big black hat on! He was at her side in a moment.

"I thought you were n't coming," he said.

*She was laughing rather breathlessly as she put out her hand to him; their eyes met. He took her quickly across the platform, talking at a great rate to hide his feelings.*

she looked beautiful. In her hat were large silk roses, loured like tarnished gold. Her costume of dark cloth tied so beautifully over her breast and shoulders. His smile went up as he walked with her. He felt the station master, who knew him, eyed her with awe and admiration.

"I was sure you were n't coming," he laughed shakily, he laughed in answer, almost with a little cry.

"And I wondered, when I was in the train, whatever could do if you were n't there!" she said.

He caught her hand impulsively, and they went along the narrow twitchel. They took the road into Nuttall and over the Reckoning House Farm. It was a blue, mild day. Everywhere the brown leaves lay scattered; many scarlet hips stood upon the hedge beside the wood. He gathered a few for her to wear.

"Though, really," he said, as he fitted them into the breast of her coat, "you ought to object to my getting them, because of the birds. But they don't care much for rose-hips in this part, where they can get plenty of stuff. You often find the berries going rotten in spring-time."

So he chattered, scarcely aware of what he said, only knowing he was putting berries in the bosom of her coat, while she stood patiently for him. And she watched his quick hands, so full of life, and it seemed to her she had never seen anything before. Till now, everything had been indistinct.

They came near to the colliery. It stood quite still and black among the corn-fields, its immense heap of slag seen rising almost from the oats.

"What a pity there is a coal-pit here where it is so pretty!" said Clara.

"Do you think so?" he answered. "You see, I am so used to it I should miss it. No; and I like the pits here and there. I like the rows of trucks, and the headstocks, and the steam in the daytime, and the lights at night. When I was a boy, I always thought a pillar of cloud lay and a pillar of fire by night was a pit, with its

ed its lights, and the burning bank, — and I thought the  
ord was always at the pit-top."

As they drew near home she walked in silence, and  
emed to hang back. He pressed her fingers in his own.  
e flushed, but gave no response.

"Don't you want to come home?" he asked.

"Yes, I want to come," she replied.

It did not occur to him that her position in his home  
uld be rather a peculiar and difficult one. To him it  
med just as if one of his men friends were going to  
introduced to his mother, only nicer.

The Morels lived in a house in an ugly street that ran  
wn a steep hill. The street itself was hideous. The  
use was rather superior to most. It was old, grimy,  
h a big bay window, and it was semi-detached; but it  
ked gloomy. Then Paul opened the door to the garden,  
ll all was different. The sunny afternoon was there,  
another land. By the path grew tansy and little  
es. In front of the window was a plot of sunny grass,  
old lilacs round it. And away went the garden,  
heaps of dishevelled chrysanthemums in the sun-  
ne, down to the sycamore-tree, and the field, and be-  
nd one looked over a few red-roofed cottages to the  
s with all the glow of the autumn afternoon.

Mrs. Morel sat in her rocking-chair, wearing her black  
blouse. Her grey-brown hair was taken smooth back  
m her brow and her high temples; her face was rather  
le. Clara, suffering, followed Paul into the kitchen.  
rs. Morel rose. Clara thought her a lady, even rather  
ff. The young woman was very nervous. She had  
most a wistful look, almost resigned.

"Mother — Clara," said Paul.

Mrs. Morel held out her hand and smiled.

"He has told me a good deal about you," she said.

The blood flamed in Clara's cheek.

"I hope you don't mind my coming," she faltered.

"I was pleased when he said he would bring you," r  
d Mrs. Morel.

Paul, watching, felt his heart contract with pain. mother looked so small, and sallow, and done-for by the luxuriant Clara.

"It's such a pretty day, mother!" he said. "And saw a jay."

His mother looked at him; he had turned to her. thought what a man he seemed, in his dark, well-made clothes. He was pale and detached-looking; it would be hard for any woman to keep him. Her heart glowed; she was sorry for Clara.

"Perhaps you'll leave your things in the parlour," Mrs. Morel nicely to the young woman.

"Oh, thank you," she replied.

"Come on," said Paul, and he led the way into the front-room, with its old piano, its mahogany furniture yellowing marble mantelpiece. A fire was burning; place was littered with books and drawing-boards. leave my things lying about," he said. "It's so much easier."

She loved his artist's paraphernalia, and the books, the photos of people. Soon he was telling her: this William, this was William's young lady in the eve dress, this was Annie and her husband, this was Arthur and his wife and the baby. She felt as if she were being taken into the family. He showed her photos, sketches, and they talked a little while. Then they turned to the kitchen. Mrs. Morel put aside her apron. Clara wore a blouse of fine silk chiffon, with narrow blue and white stripes; her hair was done simply, coiled on top of her head. She looked rather stately and reserve.

"You have gone to live down Sneinton Boulevard," said Mrs. Morel. "When I was a girl — girl, I say when I was a young woman we lived in Minerva Terrace."

"Oh, did you!" said Clara. "I have a friend in Ber 6."

And the conversation had started. They talked of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire people; it interested them. Clara was still rather nervous; Mrs. Morel was still

her dignity. She clipped her language very clear-  
eise. But they were going to get on well to-  
Paul saw.

Morel measured herself against the younger  
and found herself easily stronger. Clara was  
cial. She knew Paul's surprising regard for his  
and she had dreaded the meeting, expecting some-  
er hard and cold. She was surprised to find this  
terested woman chatting with such readiness; and  
e felt, as she felt with Paul, that she would not  
stand in Mrs. Morel's way. There was something  
and certain in his mother, as if she never had a  
ug in her life.

ntly Morel came down, ruffled and yawning, from  
rnoon sleep. He scratched his grizzled head, he  
in his stocking feet, his waistcoat hung open over  
t. He seemed incongruous.

s is Mrs. Dawes, father," said Paul.

Morel pulled himself together. Clara saw Paul's  
of bowing and shaking hands.

indeed!" exclaimed Morel. "I am very glad to  
— I am, I assure you. But don't disturb yourself,  
; make yourself quite comfortable, and be very  
."

was astonished at this flood of hospitality from  
collier. He was so courteous, so gallant! She  
him most delightful.

I may you have come far?" he asked.

y from Nottingham," she said.

on Nottingham! Then you have had a beautiful  
your journey."

he strayed into the scullery to wash his hands  
e, and from force of habit came on to the hearth  
e towel to dry himself.

a Clara felt the refinement and sang-froid of the  
ld. *Mrs. Morel* was perfectly at her ease. *The*  
*out the tea and attending to the people went*  
*usly, without interrupting her in her talk. Th*

was a lot of room at the oval table; the china of dark blue willow-pattern looked pretty on the glossy cloths. There was a little bowl of small, yellow chrysanthemums. Clara felt she completed the circle, and it was a pleasure to her. But she was rather afraid of the self-possession of the Morels, father and all. She took their tone; there was a feeling of balance. It was a cool, clear atmosphere where everyone was himself, and in harmony. Clara enjoyed it, but there was a fear deep at the bottom of her.

Paul cleared the table whilst his mother and Clara talked. Clara was conscious of his quick, vigorous body as it came and went, seeming blown quickly by a wind at its work. It was almost like the hither and thither of a leaf that comes unexpected. Most of herself went with him. By the way she leaned forward, as if listening, Mrs. Morel could see she was possessed elsewhere as she talked, and again the elder woman was sorry for her.

Having finished, he strolled down the garden, leaving the two women to talk. It was a hazy, sunny afternoon, mild and soft. Clara glanced through the window after him as he loitered among the chrysanthemums. She felt as if something almost tangible fastened her to him; yet it seemed so easy in his graceful, indolent movement, so detached as he tied up the too-heavy flower-branches to the stakes, that she wanted to shriek in her helplessness.

Mrs. Morel rose.

"You will let me help you wash up," said Clara.

"Eh, there are so few, it will only take me a minute," said the other.

Clara, however, dried the tea-things, and was glad to be on such good terms with his mother; but it was a torture not to be able to follow him down the garden. Last she allowed herself to go; she felt as if a rope were taken off her ankle.

The afternoon was golden over the hills of Derbyshire. He stood across in the other garden, beside a bush of Michaelmas daisies, watching the last bees crawl in

ive. Hearing her coming, he turned to her with an easy motion, saying:

"It's the end of the run with these chaps."

Clara stood near him. Over the low red wall in front as the country and the far-off hills, all golden dim.

At that moment Miriam was entering through the garden-door. She saw Clara go up to him, saw him turn, and saw them come to rest together. Something in their perfect isolation together made her know that it was accomplished between them, that they were, as she put it, married. She walked very slowly down the cinder-track of the long garden.

Clara had pulled a button from a hollyhock spire, and was breaking it to get the seeds. Above her bowed head the pink flowers stared, as if defending her. The last bees were falling down to the hive.

"Count your money," laughed Paul, as she broke the last seeds one by one from the roll of coin. She looked at him.

"I'm well off," she said, smiling.

"How much? Pf!" He snapped his fingers. "Can I turn them into gold?"

"I'm afraid not," she laughed.

They looked into each other's eyes, laughing. At that moment they became aware of Miriam. There was a click, and everything had altered.

"Hello, Miriam!" he exclaimed. "You said you'd come!"

"Yes. Had you forgotten?"

She shook hands with Clara, saying:

"It seems strange to see you here."

"Yes," replied the other; "it seems strange to be here."

There was a hesitation.

"It is pretty, is n't it?" said Miriam.

"I like it very much," replied Clara.

Then Miriam realized that Clara was accepted as had never been.

"Have you come down alone?" asked Paul.

"Yes; I went to Agatha's to tea. We are going to chapel. I only called in for a moment to see Clara."

"You should have come in here to tea," he said.

Miriam laughed shortly, and Clara turned impatiently aside.

"Do you like the chrysanthemums?" he asked.

"Yes; they are very fine," replied Miriam.

"Which sort do you like best?" he asked.

"I don't know. The bronze, I think."

"I don't think you've seen all the sorts. Come and look. Come and see which are *your* favourites, Clara."

He led the two women back to his own garden, where the towzled bushes of flowers of all colours stood raggedly along the path down to the field. The situation did not embarrass him, to his knowledge.

"Look, Miriam; these are the white ones that came from your garden. They are n't so fine here, are they?"

"No," said Miriam.

"But they're harder. You're so sheltered; things grow big and tender, and then die. These little yellow ones I like. Will you have some?"

While they were out there the bells began to ring in the church, sounding loud across the town and the field. Miriam looked at the tower, proud among the clustering roofs, and remembered the sketches he had brought her. It had been different then, but he had not left her even yet. She asked him for a book to read. He ran indoors.

"What! is that Miriam?" asked his mother coldly.

"Yes; she said she'd call and see Clara."

"You told her, then?" came the sarcastic answer.

"Yes; why should n't I?"

"There's certainly no reason why you should n't," said Mrs. Morel, and she returned to her book. He winced from his mother's irony, frowned irritably, thinking: "Why can't I do as I like?"

"You've not seen Mrs. Morel before?" Miriam was saying to Clara.

## *Passion*

"No; but she's *so* nice!"

"Yes," said Miriam, dropping her head; "in says she's very fine."

"I should think so."

"Had Paul told you much about her?"

"He had talked a good deal."

"Ha!"

There was silence until he returned with the book

"When will you want it back?" Miriam asked.

"When you like," he answered.

Clara turned to go indoors, whilst he accompanied Miriam to the gate.

"When will you come up to Willey Farm?" the lady asked.

"I could n't say," replied Clara.

"Mother asked me to say she'd be pleased to see you any time, if you cared to come."

"Thank you; I should like to, but I can't say when."

"Oh, very well!" exclaimed Miriam rather bitterly, turning away.

She went down the path with her mouth to the flower he had given her.

"You're sure you won't come in?" he said.

"No, thanks."

"We are going to chapel."

"Ha, I shall see you then!" Miriam was very bitter.

"Yes."

They parted. He felt guilty towards her. She was bitter, and she scorned him. He still belonged to hers, she believed; yet he could have Clara, take her home with her next his mother in chapel, give her the same hymn-book he had given herself years before. She heard him running quickly indoors.

But he did not go straight in. Halting on the bank of grass, he heard his mother's voice, then Clara's answer,

"What I hate is the bloodhound quality in Miriam."

"Yes," said his mother quickly, "yes; does n't you hate her, now!"

His heart went hot, and he was angry with them talking about the girl. What right had they to that? Something in the speech itself stung him into flame of hate against Miriam. Then his own heart bellowed furiously at Clara's taking the liberty of speaking so about Miriam. After all, the girl was the better woman of the two, he thought, if it came to goodness. He went indoors. His mother looked excited. She was beating with her hand rhythmically on the sofa-armrests women do who are wearing out. He could never fail to see the movement. There was a silence; then he began to talk.

In chapel Miriam saw him find the place in the hymn-book for Clara, in exactly the same way as he used to find it for herself. And during the sermon he could see the girl across the chapel, her hat throwing a dark shadow over her face. What did she think, seeing Clara with him? He did not stop to consider. He felt himself drawn towards Miriam.

After chapel he went over Pentrich with Clara. It was a dark autumn night. They had said good-by to Miriam, and his heart had smitten him as he left the girl alone. "But it serves her right," he said inwardly, and it almost gave him pleasure to go off without her eyes with this other handsome woman.

There was a scent of damp leaves in the darkness. Clara's hand lay warm and inert in his own as they walked. He was full of conflict. The battle that raged in him made him feel desperate.

Up Pentrich Hill Clara leaned against him as he walked. He slid his arm round her waist. Feeling the strong motion of her body under his arm as she walked, the tightness in his chest because of Miriam relaxed, and the hot blood bathed him. He held her closer and closer.

"Then: "You still keep on with Miriam," she said quietly.

"Only talk. There never was a great deal more talk between us," he said bitterly.

'Your mother does n't care for her," said Clara.

'No, or I might have married her. But it's all up, lly!"

Suddenly his voice went passionate with hate.

'If I was with her now, we should be jawing about 'Christian Mystery,' or some such tack. Thank d, I'm not!"

They walked on in silence for some time.

'But you can't really give her up," said Clara.

'I don't give her up, because there's nothing to e," he said.

'There is for her."

'I don't know why she and I should n't be friends long as we live," he said. "But it'll only be friends." Clara drew away from him, leaning away from contact h him.

'What are you drawing away for?" he asked.

She did not answer, but drew farther from him.

'Why do you want to walk alone?" he asked.

Still there was no answer. She walked resentfully, ging her head.

'Because I said I would be friends with Miriam!" he laimed.

She would not answer him anything.

'I tell you it's only words that go between us," he sisted, trying to take her again.

She resisted. Suddenly he strode across in front of , barring her way.

'Damn it!" he said. "What do you want now?"

'You'd better run after Miriam," mocked Clara.

The blood flamed up in him. He stood showing his th. She drooped sulkily. The lane was dark, quite ely. He suddenly caught her in his arms, stretched ward, and put his mouth on her face in a kiss of rage. e turned frantically to avoid him. He held her fast. rd and relentless his mouth came for her. Her breast t against the wall of his chest. Helpless, she we in his arms, and he kissed her, and kissed her.

"Wait! I'll look!" But he could not see. "I'll  
like a match."

He secretly hoped it was too late to catch the train.  
He saw the glowing lantern of his hands as he cradled  
light; then his face lit up, his eyes fixed on the  
ch. Instantly all was dark again. All was black  
ore her eyes; only a glowing match was red near her  
Where was he?

What is it?" she asked, afraid.

You can't do it," his voice answered out of the  
kness.

There was a pause. She felt in his power. She had  
d the ring in his voice. It frightened her.

What time is it?" she asked, quiet, definite, hope-

Two minutes to nine," he replied, telling the truth  
a struggle.

And can I get from here to the station in fourteen  
tes?"

No. At any rate—"

He could distinguish his dark form again a yard or  
way. She wanted to escape.

But can't I do it?" she pleaded.

If you hurry," he said brusquely. "But you could  
walk it, Clara; it's only seven miles to the tram.  
come with you."

No; I want to catch the train."

But why?"

do—I want to catch the train."

ddenly his voice altered.

Very well," he said, dry and hard. "Come along,  
"

nd he plunged ahead into the darkness. She ran  
him, wanting to cry. Now he was hard and cruel  
er. She ran over the rough, dark fields behind him,  
of breath, ready to drop. But the double row of  
s at the station drew nearer. Suddenly:  
There she is!" he cried, breaking into a run.

There was a faint rattling noise. Away to the right the train, like a luminous caterpillar, was threading across the night. The rattling ceased.

"She's over the viaduct. You'll just do it."

Clara ran, quite out of breath, and fell at last into the train. The whistle blew. He was gone. Gone — and she was in a carriage full of people. She felt the cruelty of it.

He turned round and plunged home. Before he knew where he was he was in the kitchen at home. He was very pale. His eyes were dark and dangerous-looking, as if he were drunk. His mother looked at him.

"Well, I must say your boots are in a nice state!" she said.

He looked at his feet. Then he took off his overcoat. His mother wondered if he were drunk.

"She caught the train, then?" she said.

"Yes."

"I hope *her* feet were n't so filthy. Where on earth you dragged her I don't know!"

He was silent and motionless for some time.

"Did you like her?" he asked grudgingly at last.

"Yes, I liked her. But you'll tire of her, my son, you know you will."

He did not answer. She noticed how he laboured in his breathing.

"Have you been running?" she asked.

"We had to run for the train."

"You'll go and knock yourself up. You'd better drink hot milk."

It was as good a stimulant as he could have, but he refused and went to bed. There he lay face down on the counterpane, and shed tears of rage and pain. There was a physical pain that made him bite his lips till they bled, and the chaos inside him left him unable to think almost to feel.

"This is how she serves me, is it?" he said in heart, over and over, pressing his face in the quilt.

hated her. Again he went over the scene, and again  
hated her.

The next day there was a new aloofness about him. Clara was very gentle, almost loving. But he treated her distantly, with a touch of contempt. She sighed, continuing to be gentle. He came round.

One evening of that week Sarah Bernhardt was at the theatre Royal in Nottingham, giving "La Dame aux Camélias." Paul wanted to see this old and famous actress, and he asked Clara to accompany him. He told his mother to leave the key in the window for him.

"Shall I book seats?" he asked of Clara.

"Yes. And put on an evening suit, will you? I've never seen you in it."

"But, good Lord, Clara! Think of *me* in evening suits in the theatre!" he remonstrated.

"Would you rather not?" she asked.

"I will if you *want* me to; but I s'll feel a fool." She laughed at him.

"Then feel a fool for my sake, once, won't you?"

The request made his blood flush up.

"I suppose I s'll have to."

"What are you taking a suit-case for?" his mother asked.

He blushed furiously.

"Clara asked me," he said.

"And what seats are you going in?"

"Circle — three-and-six each!"

"Well, I'm sure!" exclaimed his mother sarcastically.

"It's only once in the bluest of blue moons," he said.

He dressed at Jordan's, put on an overcoat and a cap and met Clara in a café. She was with one of her suffragette friends. She wore an old long coat, which did not fit her, and had a little wrap over her head, which he hated. The three went to the theatre together.

Clara took off her coat on the stairs, and he discovered she was in a sort of semi-evening dress, that left her shoulder and part of her breast bare. Her hair was

fashionably. The dress, a simple thing of green crêpe, suited her. She looked quite grand, he thought. He could see her figure inside the frock, as if that were wrapped closely round her. The firmness and the softness of her upright body could almost be felt as he looked at her. He clenched his fists.

And he was to sit all the evening beside her beautiful naked arm, watching the strong throat rise from the strong chest, watching the breasts under the green stuff, the curve of her limbs in the tight dress. Something in him hated her again for submitting him to this torture of nearness. And he loved her as she balanced her head and stared straight in front of her, pouting, wistful, immobile, as if she yielded herself to her fate because it was too strong for her. She could not help herself; she was in the grip of something bigger than herself. A kind of eternal look about her, as if she were a wistful sphinx, made it necessary for him to kiss her. He dropped his programme, and crouched down on the floor to get it, so that he could kiss her hand and wrist. Her beauty was torture to him. She sat immobile. Only, when the lights went down, she sank a little against him, and he caressed her hand and arm with his fingers. He could smell her faint perfume. All the time his blood kept sweeping up in great white-hot waves that killed his consciousness momentarily.

The drama continued. He saw it all in the distance going on somewhere; he did not know where, but it seemed far away inside him. He was Clara's white heavy arms, her throat, her moving bosom. That seemed to himself. Then away somewhere the play went on, and he was identified with that also. There was no himself. The grey and black eyes of Clara, her bosom coming down on him, her arm that he held gripped between his hands, were all that existed. Then he felt himself small and helpless, her towering in her force above him.

Only the intervals, when the lights came up, he expressibly. He wanted to run anywhere, so lost

d be dark again. In a maze, he wandered out for a  
k. Then the lights were out, and the strange, insane  
ty of Clara and the drama took hold of him again.  
he play went on. But he was obsessed by the desire  
iss the tiny blue vein that nestled in the bend of her

He could feel it. His whole life seemed suspended  
ie had put his lips there. It must be done. And the  
r people! At last he bent quickly forward and  
hed it with his lips. His moustache brushed the sensi-  
flesh. Clara shivered, drew away her arm.

Then all was over, the lights up, the people clapping,  
ame to himself and looked at his watch. His train  
gone.

I s'll have to walk home!" he said.  
ara looked at him.

Is it too late?" she asked.

e nodded. Then he helped her on with her coat.

I love you! You look beautiful in that dress," he  
mured over her shoulder, among the throng of bustling  
le.

he remained quiet. Together they went out of the  
tre. He saw the cabs waiting, the people passing.  
eemed he met a pair of brown eyes which hated him.  
he did not know. He and Clara turned away, me-  
ically taking the direction to the station.

he train had gone. He would have to walk the ten  
s home.

It does n't matter," he said. "I shall enjoy it."  
Won't you," she said, flushing, "come home for the  
t? I can sleep with mother."

e looked at her. Their eyes met.

What will your mother say?" he asked.

She won't mind."

You 're sure?"

Quite!"

*Shall I come?*"

*If you will.*"

And they turned away. At the first stopping they took the car. The wind blew fresh in their faces. The town was dark; the tram tipped in its haste sat with her hand fast in his.

"Will your mother be gone to bed?" he asked.

"She may be. I hope not."

They hurried along the silent, dark little street, the people out of doors. Clara quickly entered the house and hesitated.

"Come in," she said.

He leaped up the step and was in the room. Mrs. Radford's mother appeared in the inner doorway, large and kindly.

"Who have you got there?" she asked.

"It's Mr. Morel; he has missed his train. I thought we might put him up for the night, and save him a mile walk."

"H'm!" exclaimed Mrs. Radford. "That's you out! If you've invited him, he's very welcome as I'm concerned. You keep the house!"

"If you don't like me, I'll go away again," he said.

"Nay, nay, you need n't! Come along in! I know what you'll think of the supper I'd got her."

It was a little dish of chip potatoes and a piece of bacon. The table was roughly laid for one.

"You can have some more bacon," continued Radford. "More chips you can't have."

"It's a shame to bother you," he said.

"Oh, don't you be apologetic! It does n't do. You treated her to the theatre, did n't you?" There was sarcasm in the last question.

"Well?" laughed Paul uncomfortably.

"Well, and what's an inch of bacon? Take you off."

The big, straight-standing woman was trying to mate the situation. She moved about the cupboard. Clara took his coat. The room was very warm and bright in the lamplight.

"My sirs!" exclaimed Mrs. Radford; "but

"bright beauties, I must say! What's all that?"

"ieve we don't know," he said, feeling a victim.  
e is n't room in *this* house for two such bobby-  
if you fly your kites *that* high!" she rallied  
was a nasty thrust.

his dinner jacket, and Clara in her green dress  
arms, were confused. They felt they must shel-  
other in that little kitchen.

look at *that* blossom!" continued Mrs. Radford,  
to Clara. "What does she reckon she did it

ooked at Clara. She was rosy; her neck was  
blushes. There was a moment of silence.  
like to see it, don't you?" he asked.

other had them in her power. All the time his  
s beating hard, and he was tight with anxiety.  
ould fight her.

ike to see it!" exclaimed the old woman. "What  
like to see her make a fool of herself for?"

seen people look bigger fools," he said. Clara  
r his protection now.

ay! and when was that?" came the sarcastic  
".

n they made frights of themselves," he answered.  
Radford, large and threatening, stood suspended  
carthrug, holding her fork.

"re fools either road," she answered at length,  
to the Dutch oven.

he said, fighting stoutly. "Folk ought to look  
s they can."

do you call *that* looking nice!" cried the mother,  
a scornful fork at Clara. "That — that looks  
was n't properly dressed!"

ieve you're jealous that you can't swank as well,"  
*laughing*.

*I could have worn evening dress with anybody  
ted to!*" came the scornful answer.

"And why did n't you want to?" he asked pertinaciously.  
"Or did you wear it?"

There was a long pause. Mrs. Radford readjusted the bacon in the Dutch oven. His heart beat fast, for she had offended her.

"Me!" she exclaimed at last. "No, I did n't! when I was in service, I knew as soon as one of the men came out in bare shoulders what sort *she* was, going her sixpenny hop!"

"Were you too good to go to a sixpenny hop?" said.

Clara sat with bowed head. His eyes were dark and glittering. Mrs. Radford took the Dutch oven from the fire, and stood near him, putting bits of bacon on a plate.

"*There's* a nice crozzly bit!" she said.

"Don't give me the best!" he said.

"*She's* got what *she* wants," was the answer.

There was a sort of scornful forbearance in the woman's tone that made Paul know she was mollified.

"But *do* have some!" he said to Clara.

She looked up at him with her grey eyes, humiliated and lonely.

"No, thanks!" she said.

"Why won't you?" he answered, caressively.

The blood was beating up like fire in his veins. Radford sat down again, large and impressive and alone. He left Clara altogether to attend to the mother.

"They say Sarah Bernhardt's fifty," he said.

"Fifty! She's turned sixty!" came the scornful answer.

"Well," he said, "you'd never think it! She might want to howl even now."

"I should like to see myself howling at *that* bad old gage!" said Mrs. Radford. "It's time she began to make herself a grandmother, not a shrieking catamaran."

He laughed.

"A catamaran is a boat the Malays use," he said.

d it 's a word as I use," she retorted.

" mother does sometimes, and it 's no good my tell-  
, " he said.

"d think she boxes your ears," said Mrs. Radford,  
mouredly.

e 'd like to, and she says she will, so I give her  
stool to stand on."

at 's the worst of my mother," said Clara. " She  
ants a stool for anything."

t she often can't touch *that* lady with a long prop,"  
d Mrs. Radford to Paul.

'd think she does n't want touching with a prop,"  
hed. " *I* should n't."

might do the pair of you good to give you a  
n the head with one," said the mother, laughing  
y.

y are you so vindictive towards me? " he said.  
not stolen anything from you."

; I 'll watch that," laughed the older woman.

the supper was finished. Mrs. Radford sat guard  
hair. Paul lit a cigarette. Clara went upstairs,  
ng with a sleeping-suit, which she spread on the  
to air.

y, I 'd forgot all about *them!* " said Mrs. Radford.  
e have they sprung from? "

t of my drawer."

n! You bought 'em for Baxter, an' he would n't  
n, would he? " — laughing. " Said he reckoned to  
ut trousers i' bed." She turned confidentially to  
aying: " He could n't *bear* 'em, them pyjama  
,

young man sat making rings of smoke.

ll, it 's everyone to his taste," he laughed.

followed a little discussion of the merits of  
. s.

mother loves me in them," he said. " She says  
*tierrot.*"

n imagine they 'd suit you," said Mrs. Radfor

After a while he glanced at the little clock that was ticking on the mantelpiece. It was half-past twelve.

"It is funny," he said, "but it takes hours to settle down to sleep after the theatre."

"It's about time you did," said Mrs. Radford, clearing the table.

"Are you tired?" he asked of Clara.

"Not the least bit," she answered, avoiding his eyes.

"Shall we have a game at cribbage?" he said.

"I've forgotten it."

"Well, I'll teach you again. May we play crib, Mrs. Radford?" he asked.

"You'll please yourselves," she said; "but it's pretty late."

"A game or so will make us sleepy," he answered.

Clara brought the cards, and sat spinning her wedding ring whilst he shuffled them. Mrs. Radford was washing up in the scullery. As it grew later Paul felt the situation getting more and more tense.

"Fifteen two, fifteen four, fifteen six, and two eight—!"

The clock struck one. Still the game continued. Mrs. Radford had done all the little jobs preparatory to going to bed, had locked the door and filled the kettle. So Paul went on dealing and counting. He was obsessed by Clara's arms and throat. He believed he could see where the division was just beginning for her breasts. He could not leave her. She watched his hands, and felt her joints melt as they moved quickly. She was so near; it was almost as if he touched her, and yet not quite. His mind was roused. He hated Mrs. Radford. She sat on, nearly dropping asleep, but determined and obstinate in her chair. Paul glanced at her, then at Clara. She met his eyes, that were angry, mocking, and hard as steel. He own answered him in shame. He knew she, at any rate, was of his mind. He played on.

At last Mrs. Radford roused herself stiffly, and said

"Is n't it nigh on time you two was thinking o' bed?" Paul played on without answering. He hated her sufficiently to murder her.

"Half a minute!" he said.

The elder woman rose and sailed stubbornly into the gallery, returning with his candle, which she put on the mantelpiece. Then she sat down again. The hatred of went so hot down his veins, he dropped his cards.

"We'll stop, then," he said, but his voice was still a challenge.

Clara saw his mouth shut hard. Again he glanced at . It seemed like an agreement. She bent over the ends, coughing, to clear her throat.

"Well, I'm glad you've finished," said Mrs. Radford. "Here, take your things"—she thrust the warm suit in hand—"and this is your candle. Your room's overs; there's only two, so you can't go far wrong. Well, good-night. I hope you'll rest well."

"I'm sure I shall; I always do," he said.

"Yes; and so you ought at your age," she replied.

He bade good-night to Clara, and went. The twisting lirs of white, scrubbed wood creaked and clanged at every step. He went doggedly. The two doors faced each other. He went in his room, pushed the door to, without fastening the latch.

It was a small room with a large bed. Some of Clara's trinkets were on the dressing-table—her hair-brush. Her petticoats and some skirts hung under a cloth in a corner. There was actually a pair of stockings over a chair. He closed the room. Two books of his own were there on a shelf. He undressed, folded his suit, and sat on the bed, listening. Then he blew out the candle, lay down, and in two minutes was almost asleep. Then click!—he was wide awake and writhing in torment. It was as if, when he had nearly got to sleep, something had bitten him suddenly and sent him mad. He sat up and looked at the room in the darkness, his feet doubled under him, perfectly motionless, listening. He heard a cat somewhere

away outside; then the heavy, poised tread of the mother, then Clara's distinct voice:

"Will you unfasten my dress?"

There was silence for some time. At last the mother said:

"Now then! are n't you coming up?"

"No, not yet," replied the daughter calmly.

"Oh, very well then! If it's not late enough, stay a bit longer. Only you need n't come waking me up when I've got to sleep."

"I shan't be long," said Clara.

Immediately afterwards Paul heard the mother slowly mounting the stairs. The candle-light flashed through cracks in his door. Her dress brushed the door, and his heart jumped. Then it was dark, and he heard the click of her latch. She was very leisurely indeed in her preparations for sleep. After a long time it was quite still. He sat strung up on the bed, shivering slightly. His door was an inch open. As Clara came upstairs, he would intercept her. He waited. All was dead silent. The clock struck two. Then he heard a slight scrape at the fender downstairs. Now he could not help himself. His shivering was uncontrollable. He felt he must go mad.

He stepped off the bed, and stood a moment, shuddering. Then he went straight to the door. He tried to step lightly. The first stair cracked like a shot. He listened. The old woman stirred in her bed. The staircase was dark. There was a slit of light under the stair-foot door, which opened into the kitchen. He stood a moment. Then he went on, mechanically. Every step creaked, and his back was creeping, lest the old woman's door should open behind him up above. He fumbled with the door at the bottom. The latch opened with a loud clack. He ran through into the kitchen, and shut the door noiseily behind him. The old woman dare n't come now.

Then he stood, arrested. Clara was kneeling on a rug of white underclothing on the hearthrug, her back to

warming herself. She did not look round, but sat  
on her heels, and her rounded, beautiful back  
towards him, and her face was hidden. She was warm-  
her body at the fire for consolation. The glow was  
on one side, the shadow was dark and warm on the  
other. Her arms hung slack.

He shuddered violently, clenching his teeth and fists  
to keep control. Then he went forward to her. He  
one hand on her shoulder, the fingers of the other  
under her chin to raise her face. A convulsed shiver  
through her, once, twice, at his touch. She kept her  
bent.

"Sorry!" he murmured, realizing that his hands were  
cold.

Then she looked up at him, frightened, like a thing that  
was afraid of death.

"My hands are so cold," he murmured.

"I like it," she whispered, closing her eyes.

The breath of her words was on his mouth. Her arms  
ped his knees. The cord of his sleeping-suit dangled  
nst her and made her shiver. As the warmth went  
him, his shuddering became less.

At length, unable to stand so any more, he raised her,  
she buried her head on his shoulder. His hands went  
her slowly with an infinite tenderness of caress. She  
g close to him, trying to hide herself against him.  
clasped her very fast. Then at last she looked at  
mute, imploring, looking to see if she must be  
urned.

His eyes were dark, very deep, and very quiet. It was  
f her beauty and his taking it hurt him, made him  
owful. He looked at her with a little pain, and was  
id. He was so humble before her. She kissed him  
ently on the eyes, first one, then the other, and she  
ed herself to him. She gave herself. He held her fast,  
as a moment intense almost to agony.

he stood letting him adore her and tremble with joy  
r. It healed her hurt pride. It healed her; it ma-

her glad. It made her feel erect and proud again. pride had been wounded inside her. She had been ened. Now she radiated with joy and pride again. was her restoration and her recognition.

Then he looked at her, his face radiant. They to each other, and he strained her to his chest. seconds ticked off, the minutes passed, and still stood clasped rigid together, mouth to mouth, like in one block.

But again his fingers went seeking over her, wandering, dissatisfied. The hot blood came up with wave. She laid her head on his shoulder.

"Come you to my room," he murmured.

She looked at him and shook her head, her mouth disconsolately, her eyes heavy with passion. watched her fixedly.

"Yes!" he said.

Again she shook her head.

"Why not?" he asked.

She looked at him still heavily, sorrowfully, and she shook her head. His eyes hardened, and he g

When, later on, he was back in bed, he wondered if she had refused to come to him openly, so that he would know. At any rate, then things would have been definite. And she could have stayed with him there without having to go, as she was, to her mother's house. It was strange, and he could not understand it. Almost immediately he fell asleep.

He awoke in the morning with someone speaking to him. Opening his eyes, he saw Mrs. Radford, stately, looking down on him. She held a cup in her hand.

"Do you think you're going to sleep till Doolittle?" she said.

He laughed at once.

"It ought only to be about five o'clock," he said.

"Well," she answered, "it's half-past seven or not. Here, I've brought you a cup of tea."

He rubbed his face, pushed the tumbled hair off his head, and roused himself.

"What's it so late for!" he grumbled.

He resented being awakened. It amused her. She saw neck in the flannel sleeping-jacket, as white and round a girl's. He rubbed his hair crossly.

"It's no good your scratching your head," she said. "I won't make it no earlier. Here, an' how long d' you think I'm going to stand waiting wi' this here cup?"

"Oh, dash the cup!" he said.

"You should go to bed earlier," said the woman.

He looked up at her, laughing with impudence.

"I went to bed before *you* did," he said.

"Yes, my Guyney, you did!" she exclaimed.

"Fancy," he said, stirring his tea, "having tea ought to bed to me! My mother'll think I'm ruined life."

"Don't she never do it?" asked Mrs. Radford.

"She'd as leave think of flying."

"Ah, I always spoilt my lot! That's why they've ned out such bad uns," said the elderly woman.

"You'd only Clara," he said. "And Mr. Radford's eaven. So I suppose there's only you left to be the un."

"I'm not bad; I'm only soft," she said, as she went of the bedroom. "I'm only a fool, I am!"

Clara was very quiet at breakfast, but she had a sort air of proprietorship over him that pleased him infi-  
ly. Mrs. Radford was evidently fond of him. He an to talk of his painting.

"What's the good," exclaimed the mother, "of your rtling and worrying and twistin' and too-in' at that ting of yours? What *good* does it do you, I should to know? You'd better be enjoyin' yourself."

"Oh, but," exclaimed Paul, "I made over thirty eas last year."

"Did you! Well, that's a consideration, but it's not o the time you put in."

"And I've got four pounds owing. A man said give me five pounds if I'd paint him and his missis the dog and the cottage. And I went and put the in instead of the dog, and he was waxy, so I had to a quid off. I was sick of it, and I didn't like the dog made a picture of it. What shall I do when he pays the four pounds?"

"Nay! you know your own uses for your money," Mrs. Radford.

"But I'm going to bust this four pounds. Should go to the seaside for a day or two?"

"Who?"

"You and Clara and me."

"What, on your money!" she exclaimed, half wrathful.

"Why not?"

"You would n't be long in breaking your neck at hurdle race!" she said.

"So long as I get a good run for my money! Will you?"

"Nay; you may settle that atween you."

"And you're willing?" he asked, amazed and rejoicing.

"You'll do as you like," said Mrs. Radford, "whether I'm willing or not."

## CHAPTER XIII

BAXTER DAWES

DON after Paul had been to the theatre with Clara, he was drinking in the Punch Bowl with some friends as when Dawes came in. Clara's husband was growing fat; his eyelids were getting slack over his brown eyes; he was losing his healthy firmness of flesh. He was evidently on the downward track. Having quarrelled with his sister, he had gone into cheap lodgings. His mistress had left him for a man who would marry her. He had been in prison one night for fighting when he was drunk, and there was a shady betting episode in which he was concerned.

Paul and he were confirmed enemies, and yet there was between them that peculiar feeling of intimacy, as if they were secretly near to each other, which sometimes exists between two people, although they never speak one another. Paul often thought of Baxter Dawes, and wanted to get at him and be friends with him. He knew that Dawes often thought about him, and that man was drawn to him by some bond or other. And the two never looked at each other save in hostility. Since he was a superior employee at Jordan's, it was a good thing for Paul to offer Dawes a drink.

"What'll you have?" he asked of him.

"Nowt wi' a bleeder like you!" replied the man.

Paul turned away with a slight disdainful movement of the shoulders, very irritating.

"The aristocracy," he continued, "is really a military institution. Take Germany, now. She's got thousands of aristocrats whose only means of existence is the army. They're deadly poor, and life's deadly slow. So the

hope for a war. They look for war as a chance getting on. Till there's a war they are idle good-for-nothings. When there's a war, they are leaders and commanders. There you are, then—they want war!"

He was not a favourite debater in the public-house being too quick and overbearing. He irritated the older men by his assertive manner, and his cocksureness. They listened in silence, and were not sorry when he finished.

Dawes interrupted the young man's flow of eloquence by asking, in a loud sneer:

"Did you learn all that at th' theatre th' other night?"

Paul looked at him; their eyes met. Then he knew Dawes had seen him coming out of the theatre with Clara.

"Why, what about th' theatre?" asked one of Paul's associates, glad to get a dig at the young fellow, who was sniffing something tasty.

"Oh, him in a bob-tailed evening suit, on the ladda!" sneered Dawes, jerking his head contemptuous at Paul.

"That's comin' it strong," said the mutual friend. "Tart an' all?"

"Tart, begod!" said Dawes.

"Go on; let's have it!" cried the mutual friend.

"You've got it," said Dawes, "an' I reckon Morel had it an' all."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" said the mutual friend. "An' was it a proper tart?"

"Tart, God blimey — yes!"

"How do you know?"

"Oh," said Dawes, "I reckon he spent th' night —"

There was a good deal of laughter at Paul's expense.

"But who *was* she? D' you know her?" asked the mutual friend.

"I should *shay sho*," said Dawes.

This brought another burst of laughter.

"Then spit it out," said the mutual friend.

Dawes shook his head, and took a gulp of beer.

"It's a wonder he has n't let on himself," he said. He'll be braggin' of it in a bit."

"Come on, Paul," said the friend; "it's no good. You might just as well own up."

"Own up what? That I happened to take a friend to the theatre?"

"Oh well, if it was all right, tell us who she was, d," said the friend.

"She *was* all right," said Dawes.

Paul was furious. Dawes wiped his golden moustache with his fingers, sneering.

"Strike me — ! One o' that sort?" said the mutual friend. "Paul, boy, I'm surprised at you. And do you know her, Baxter?"

"Just a bit, like!"

He winked at the other men.

"Oh well," said Paul, "I'll be going!"

The mutual friend laid a detaining hand on his shoulder.

"Nay," he said, "you don't get off as easy as that, lad. We've got to have a full account of this business."

"Then get it from Dawes!" he said.

"You should n't funk your own deeds, man," remonstrated the friend.

Then Dawes made a remark which caused Paul to draw half a glass of beer in his face.

"Oh, Mr. Morel!" cried the barmaid, and she rang the bell for the "chucker-out."

Dawes spat and rushed for the young man. At that minute a brawny fellow with his shirt-sleeves rolled up and his trousers tight over his haunches intervened.

"Now, then!" he said, pushing his chest in front of Dawes.

"Come out!" cried Dawes.

*Paul was leaning, white and quivering, against the brass of the bar. He hated Dawes, wished something could*

exterminate him at that minute; and at the same time seeing the wet hair on the man's forehead, he thought he looked pathetic. He did not move.

"Come out, you—," said Dawes.

"That's enough, Dawes," cried the barmaid.

"Come on," said the "chucker-out," with kindly insistence, "you'd better be getting on."

And, by making Dawes edge away from his own close proximity, he worked him to the door.

"That's the little sod as started it!" cried Dawes half cowed, pointing to Paul Morel.

"Why, what a story, Mr. Dawes!" said the barmaid. "You know it was you all the time."

Still the "chucker-out" kept thrusting his chest forward at him, still he kept edging back, until he was in the doorway and on the steps outside; then he turned round.

"All right," he said, nodding straight at his rival.

Paul had a curious sensation of pity, almost of affection, mingled with violent hate, for the man. The closed door swung to; there was silence in the bar.

"Serve him jolly well right!" said the barmaid.

"But it's a nasty thing to get a glass of beer in your eyes," said the mutual friend.

"I tell you I was glad he did," said the barmaid. "Will you have another, Mr. Morel?"

She held up Paul's glass questioningly. He nodded.

"He's a man as does n't care for anything, is Baxt Dawes," said one.

"Pooh! is he?" said the barmaid. "He's a lone-mouthed one, he is, and they're never much good. Give me a pleasant-spoken chap, if you want a devil!"

"Well, Paul, my lad," said the friend, "you'll have to take care of yourself now for a while."

"You won't have to give him a chance over you, that's all," said the barmaid.

"Can you box?" asked a friend.

"Not a bit," he answered, still very white.

"I might give you a turn or two," said the friend.

"Thanks, I have n't time."

And presently he took his departure.

"Go along with him, Mr. Jenkinson," whispered the barmaid, tipping Mr. Jenkinson the wink.

The man nodded, took his hat, said "Good-night all!" very heartily, and followed Paul, calling:

"Half a minute, old man. You an' me's going the same road, I believe."

"Mr. Morel does n't like it," said the barmaid. "You'll see, we shan't have him in much more. I'm sorry; he's good company. And Baxter Dawes wants tickling up, that's what he wants."

Paul would have died rather than his mother should get to know of this affair. He suffered tortures of humiliation and self-consciousness. There was now a good deal of his life of which necessarily he could not speak to his mother. He had a life apart from her—her sexual life. The rest she still kept. But he felt he had to conceal something from her, and it irked him. There was a certain silence between them, and he felt he had, in that silence, to defend himself against her; he felt condemned by her. Then sometimes he hated her, and pulled at her bondage. His life wanted to free itself from her. It was like a circle where life turned back on itself, and got no farther. She bore him, loved him, kept him, and his love turned back into her, so that he could not be free to go forward with his own life, really love another woman. At this period, unknowingly, he resisted his mother's influence. He did not tell herings; there was a distance between them.

Clara was happy, almost sure of him. She felt she'd at last got him for herself; and then again came the uncertainty. He told her jestingly of the affair with her husband. Her colour came up, her grey eyes blushed.

"That's him to a 'T,'" she cried—"like a navy  
that fit for mixin' with decent folk."

" Yet you married him," he said.

It made her furious that he reminded her.

" I did!" she cried. " But how was I to know!"

" I think he might have been rather nice," he said.

" You think *I* made him what he is!" she exclaimed.

" Oh no! he made himself. But there's something about him — "

Clara looked at her lover closely. There was something in him she hated, a sort of detached criticism of herself, a coldness which made her woman's soul harder against him.

" And what are you going to do?" she asked.

" How?"

" About Baxter."

" There's nothing to do, is there?" he replied.

" You can fight him if you have to, I suppose?" she said.

" No; I haven't the least sense of the 'fist.' It's funny. With most men there's the instinct to clench the fist and hit. It's not so with me. I should want a knife or a pistol or something to fight with."

" Then you'd better carry something," she said.

" Nay," he laughed; " I'm not daggeroso."

" But he'll do something to you. You don't know him."

" All right," he said, " we'll see."

" And you'll let him?"

" Perhaps, if I can't help it."

" And if he kills you?" she said.

" I should be sorry, for his sake and mine."

Clara was silent for a moment.

" You *do* make me angry!" she exclaimed.

" That's nothing afresh," he laughed.

" But why are you so silly? You don't know him."

" And don't want."

" Yes, but you're not going to let a man do as he likes with you?"

" What must I do?" he replied, laughing.

"I should carry a revolver," she said. "I'm sure  
e's dangerous."

"I might blow my fingers off," he said.

"No; but won't you?" she pleaded.

"No."

"Not anything?"

"No."

"And you'll leave him to — ?"

"Yes."

"You are a fool!"

"Fact!"

She set her teeth with anger.

"I could *shake* you!" she cried, trembling with  
assion.

"Why?"

"Let a man like *him* do as he likes with you."

"You can go back to him if he triumphs," he said.

"Do you want me to hate you?" she asked.

"Well, I only tell you," he said.

"And you say you *love* me!" she exclaimed, low and  
dignant.

"Ought I to slay him to please you?" he said. "But  
I did, see what a hold he'd have over me."

"Do you think I'm a fool?" she exclaimed.

"Not at all. But you don't understand me, my dear."

There was a pause between them.

"But you ought *not* to expose yourself," she pleaded.  
He shrugged his shoulders.

"The man in righteousness arrayed,  
    The pure and blameless liver,  
Needs not the keen Toledo blade,  
    Nor venom-freighted quiver,"

— quoted.

She looked at him searchingly.

"I wish I could understand you," she said.

"There's simply nothing to understand," he laughed.  
She bowed her head, brooding.

He did not see Dawes for several days; then

morning as he ran upstairs from the spiral room he almost collided with the burly metal-worker.

"What the — !" cried the smith.

"Sorry!" said Paul, and passed on.

"Sorry!" sneered Dawes.

Paul whistled lightly, "Put Me among the Girls."

"I'll stop your whistle, my jockey!" he said.

The other took no notice.

"You're goin' to answer for that job of the other night."

Paul went to his desk in his corner, and turned over the leaves of the ledger.

"Go and tell Fanny I want order 097, quick!" he said to his boy.

Dawes stood in the doorway, tall and threatening looking at the top of the young man's head.

"Six and five's eleven and seven's one-and-six," Paul added aloud.

"An' you hear, do you!" said Dawes.

"Five and ninepence!" He wrote a figure. "What that?" he said.

"I'm going to show you what it is," said the smith.

The other went on adding the figures aloud.

"Yer crawlin' little — , yer dares n't face me proper!"

Paul quickly snatched the heavy ruler. Dawes started. The young man ruled some lines in his ledger. The elder man was infuriated.

"But wait till I light on you, no matter where it is. I'll settle your hash for a bit, yer little swine!"

"All right," said Paul.

At that the smith started heavily from the doorway. Just then a whistle piped shrilly. Paul went to the speaking-tube.

"Yes!" he said, and he listened. "Er — yes!" He listened, then he laughed. "I'll come down directly. I've got a visitor just now."

Dawes knew from his tone that he had been speaking to Clara. He stepped forward.

"Yer little devil!" he said. "I'll visitor you, inside of two minutes! Think I'm goin' ter have *you* whippy-snappin' round?"

The other clerks in the warehouse looked up. Paul's office-boy appeared, holding some white article.

"Fanny says you could have had it last night if you'd let her know," he said.

"All right," answered Paul, looking at the stocking. "Get it off."

Dawes stood frustrated, helpless with rage. Morel turned round.

"Excuse me a minute," he said to Dawes, and he would have run downstairs.

"By God, I'll stop your gallop!" shouted the smith, seizing him by the arm. He turned quickly.

"Hey! hey!" cried the office-boy, alarmed.

Thomas Jordan started out of his little glass office, and came running down the room.

"What's a-matter, what's a-matter?" he said, in his old man's sharp voice.

"I'm just goin' ter settle this little—, that's all," said Dawes desperately.

"What do you mean?" snapped Thomas Jordan.

"What I say," said Dawes, but he hung fire.

Morel was leaning against the counter, ashamed, half grinning.

"What's it all about?" snapped Thomas Jordan.

"Could n't say," said Paul, shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders.

"Could n't yer, could n't yer!" cried Dawes, thrusting forward his handsome, furious face, and squaring his fist.

"Have you finished?" cried the old man, strutting. "Get off about your business, and don't come here tipsy in the morning."

Dawes turned his big frame slowly upon him.

"Tipsy!" he said. "Who's tipsy? I'm no tipsy than *you* are!"

"We've heard that song before," snapped the man. "Now you get off, and don't be long about Comin' here with your rowdyng."

The smith looked down contemptuously on his employer. His hands, large and grimy, and yet well shaped for his labour, worked restlessly. Paul remembered they were the hands of Clara's husband, and a flash of hate went through him.

"Get out before you're turned out!" snapped Thomas Jordan.

"Why, who'll turn me out?" said Dawes, beginning to sneer.

Mr. Jordan started, marched up to the smith, waving him off, thrusting his stout little figure at the man saying:

"Get off my premises — get off!"

He seized and twitched Dawes' arm.

"Come off!" said the smith, and with a jerk of the elbow he sent the little manufacturer staggering backwards.

Before anyone could help him, Thomas Jordan had collided with the flimsy spring-door. It had given way and let him crash down the half-dozen steps into Fanny's room. There was a second of amazement; then men and girls were running. Dawes stood a moment looking bitterly on the scene, then he took his departure.

Thomas Jordan was shaken and bruised, not otherwise hurt. He was, however, beside himself with rage. He dismissed Dawes from his employment, and summoned him for assault.

At the trial Paul Morel had to give evidence. Asked how the trouble began, he said:

"Dawes took occasion to insult Mrs. Dawes and me because I accompanied her to the theatre one evening; then I threw some beer at him, and he wanted his revenge."

"Cherchez la femme!" smiled the magistrate.

The case was dismissed after the magistrate had Dawes he thought him a skunk.

"You gave the case away," snapped Mr. Jordan to Paul.

"I don't think I did," replied the latter. "Besides, you did n't really want a conviction, did you?"

"What do you think I took the case up for?"

"Well," said Paul, "I'm sorry if I said the wrong thing."

Clara was also very angry.

"Why need *my* name have been dragged in?" she said.

"Better speak it openly than leave it to be whispered."

"There was no need for anything at all," she declared.

"We are none the poorer," he said indifferently.

"*You* may not be," she said.

"And *you*?" he asked.

"I need never have been mentioned."

"I'm sorry," he said; but he did not sound sorry.

He told himself easily: "She will come round." And he did.

He told his mother about the fall of Mr. Jordan and the trial of Dawes. Mrs. Morel watched him closely.

"And what do you think of it all?" she asked him.

"I think he's a fool," he said.

But he was very uncomfortable, nevertheless.

"Have you ever considered where it will end?" his mother said.

"No," he answered; "things work out of themselves."

"They do, in a way one does n't like, as a rule," said his mother.

"And then one has to put up with them," he said.

"You'll find you're not as good at 'putting up' as you imagine," she said.

He went on working rapidly at his design.

"Do you ever ask *her* opinion?" she said at length.

"What of?"

"Of you, and the whole thing."

"I don't care what her opinion of me is. She's *fearfully* in love with me, but it's not very deep."

"But quite as deep as your feeling for her."

He looked up at his mother curiously.

"Yes," he said. "You know, mother, I think there must be something the matter with me, that I can't live when she's there, as a rule, I do love her. Sometimes when I see her just as *the woman*, I love her, mother; but then, when she talks and criticizes, I often don't listen to her."

"Yet she's as much sense as Miriam."

"Perhaps; and I love her better than Miriam. But why don't they hold me?"

The last question was almost a lamentation. His mother turned away her face, sat looking across the room very quiet, grave, with something of renunciation.

"But you wouldn't want to marry Clara?" he said.

"No; at first perhaps I would. But why — why do I want to marry her or anybody? I feel sometimes as if I wronged my women, mother."

"How wronged them, my son?"

"I don't know."

He went on painting rather despairingly; he touched the quick of the trouble.

"And as for wanting to marry," said his mother, "there's plenty of time yet."

"But no, mother. I even love Clara, and I did Miriam; but to give myself to them in marriage I could n't. I could n't belong to them. They seem to want *me*, and I can't ever give it them."

"You have n't met the right woman."

"And I never shall meet the right woman while I live," he said.

She was very quiet. Now she began to feel again tired as if she were done.

"We'll see, my son," she answered.

The feeling that things were going in a circle made him mad.

Clara was, indeed, passionately in love with him; he with her, as far as passion went. In the day

—got her a good deal. She was working in the same building, but he was not aware of it. He was busy, and existence was of no matter to him. But all the time she was in her spiral room she had a sense that he was there, a physical sense of his person in the same building. Every second she expected him to come through the door, and when he came it was a shock to her. But he was often short and offhand with her. He gave her his directions in an official manner, keeping her at bay. With what she had left she listened to him. She dared not misunderstand or fail to remember, but it was a cruelty to her. She wanted to touch his chest. She knew exactly how his breast was shaped under the waistcoat, and she wanted to touch it. It maddened her to hear his mechanical voice giving orders about the work. She wanted to break through the sham of it, smash the trivial coating of business which covered him with hardness, get at the man again; but she was afraid, and before she could feel the touch of his warmth he was gone, and she ached again.

He knew that she was dreary every evening she didn't see him, so he gave her a good deal of his time. The days were often a misery to her, but the evenings and the nights were usually a bliss to them both. Then they were silent. For hours they sat together, or walked together in the dark, and talked only a few, almost meaningless words. But he had her hand in his, and her bosom left warmth in his chest, making him feel whole.

One evening they were walking down by the canal, and nothing was troubling him. She knew she had not troubled him. All the time he whistled softly and persistently to himself. She listened, feeling she could learn more from his whistling than from his speech. It was a sad, satisfied tune—a tune that made her feel he would stay with her. She walked on in silence. When they came to the swing bridge he sat down on the great stone, looking at the stars in the water. He was a lover from her. She had been thinking.

"Will you always stay at Jordan's?" she asked.

"No," he answered without reflecting. "No; leave Nottingham and go abroad—soon."

"Go abroad! What for?"

"I dunno! I feel restless."

"But what shall you do?"

"I shall have to get some steady designing work some sort of sale for my pictures first," he said, am gradually making my way. I know I am."

"And when do you think you'll go?"

"I don't know. I shall hardly go for long, there's my mother."

"You could n't leave her?"

"Not for long."

She looked at the stars in the black water. They were very white and staring. It was an agony to know whether he would leave her, but it was almost an agony to have him near her.

"And if you made a nice lot of money, what would you do?" she asked.

"Go somewhere in a pretty house near London, where there's my mother."

"I see."

There was a long pause.

"I could still come and see you," he said. "I know. Don't ask me what I should do; I don't know."

There was a silence. The stars shuddered and upon the water. There came a breath of wind, which went suddenly to her, and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't ask me anything about the future," he said miserably. "I don't know anything. Be with me, and I will you, no matter what it is?"

And she took him in her arms. After all, she was a married woman, and she had no right even to what he gave her. He needed her badly. She had him in her arms, and he was miserable. With her warmth she folded him over, consoled him, loved him. She would let the world stand for itself.

After a moment he lifted his head as if he wanted to speak.

"Clara," he said, struggling.

She caught him passionately to her, pressed his head down on her breast with her hand. She could not bear the suffering in his voice. She was afraid in her soul. She might have anything of her — anything; but she did not want to know. She felt she could not bear it. She wanted him to be soothed upon her — soothed. She did clapping him and caressing him, and he was something unknown to her — something almost uncanny. She tried to soothe him into forgetfulness.

And soon the struggle went down in his soul, and he got. But then Clara was not there for him, only a man, warm, something he loved and almost worshipped, here in the dark. But it was not Clara, and she submitted to him. The naked hunger and inevitability of loving her, something strong and blind and ruthless in its primitiveness, made the hour almost terrible to him. She knew how stark and alone he was, and she felt it was great that he came to her; and she took him fully because his need was bigger either than her need or his, and her soul was still within her. She did this for him in his need, even if he left her, for she loved

All the while the peewits were screaming in the field. When he came to, he wondered what was near his eyes, strong and strong with life in the dark, and what voice was speaking. Then he realized it was the grass, and the peewit was calling. The warmth was Clara's breathing. He lifted his head, and looked into her eyes. They were dark and shining and strange, like stars at the source staring into his life, stranger to him, meeting him; and he put his face down on her throat, laid. What was she? A strong, strange, wild life, that breathed with his in the darkness through this hour. She was all so much bigger than themselves that he wed. They had met, and included in their meet-

I don't want anything to do with love when I'm at Work's work — ”

“ And what is love? ” she asked. “ Has it special hours? ”

“ Yes; out of work hours.”

“ And you'll regulate it according to Mr. J closing time? ”

“ Yes; and according to the freedom from busi any sort.”

“ It is only to exist in spare time? ”

“ That's all, and not always then — not the sort of love.”

“ And that's all you think of it? ”

“ It's quite enough.”

“ I'm glad you think so.”

And she was cold to him for some time — she him; and while she was cold and contemptuous, uneasy till she had forgiven him again. But when started afresh they were not any nearer. He kept because he never satisfied her.

In the spring they went together to the seaside, had rooms at a little cottage near Theddlethorpe, lived as man and wife. Mrs. Radford sometimes with them.

It was known in Nottingham that Paul Morel and Mrs. Dawes were going together, but as nothing very obvious, and Clara was always a solitary figure, and he seemed so simple and innocent, it did not much difference.

He loved the Lincolnshire coast, and she loved it. In the early morning they often went out together to bathe. The grey of the dawn, the far, desolate expanse of the fenland smitten with winter, the sea-meadow with herbage, were stark enough to rejoice his soul; they stepped on to the highroad from their plank-huts and looked round at the endless monotony of level land a little darker than the sky, the sea soundless beyond the sandhills, his heart filled strong

keeping relentlessness of life. She loved him then. He was solitary and strong, and his eyes had a beautiful light.

They shuddered with cold; then he raced her down the road to the green turf bridge. She could run well. Her colour soon came, her throat was bare, her eyes one. He loved her for being so luxuriously heavy, and so quick. Himself was light; she went with a beautiful rush. They grew warm, and walked hand in hand. A flush came into the sky; the wan moon, half-way down the west, sank into insignificance. On the shadowy landings began to take life, plants with great leaves became distinct. They came through a pass in the big, red sandhills on to the beach. The long waste of fore-shore lay moaning under the dawn and the sea; the ocean was a flat dark strip with a white edge. Over the gloomy sky the sky grew red. Quickly the fire spread among the clouds and scattered them. Crimson burned to orange, orange to dull gold, and in a golden glitter the sun came, dribbling fierily over the waves in little splashes, as someone had gone along and the light had spilled from a pail as she walked.

The breakers ran down the shore in long, hoarse strokes. Tiny seagulls, like specks of spray, wheeled above the line of surf. Their crying seemed larger than they. Far away the coast reached out, and melted into the morning, the tussocky sandhills seemed to sink to a level with the beach. Mablethorpe was tiny on their right. They had alone the space of all this level shore, the sea, and the upcoming sun, the faint noise of the waves, the sharp crying of the gulls.

They had a warm hollow in the sandhills where the wind did not come. He stood looking out to sea.

"It's very fine," he said.

"Now don't get sentimental," she said.

It irritated her to see him standing gazing at the sea, a solitary and poetic person. He laughed. She was only undressed.

"There are some fine waves this morning," she said triumphantly.

She was a better swimmer than he; he stood in watching her.

"Are n't you coming?" she said.

"In a minute," he answered.

She was white and velvet skinned, with heavy shoulder. A little wind, coming from the sea, blew across her body and ruffled her hair.

The morning was of a lovely limpid gold colour. Veils of shadow seemed to be drifting away on the north and south. Clara stood shrinking slightly from the touch of the wind, twisting her hair. The sea-grass rose behind the white stripped woman. She glanced at the sea, then looked at him. He was watching her with dark eyes which she loved and could not understand. She hugged her breasts between her arms, cringing, laughing:

"Oo, it will be so cold!" she said.

He bent forward and kissed her, held her suddenly close, and kissed her again. She stood waiting. I looked into her eyes, then away at the pale sands.

"Go, then!" he said quietly.

She flung her arms round his neck, drew him again to her, kissed him passionately, and went, saying:

"But you'll come in?"

"In a minute."

She went plodding heavily over the sand that was soft as velvet. He, on the sandhills, watched the great pale coast envelop her. She grew smaller, lost proportion, seemed only like a large white bird toiling forward.

"Not much more than a big white pebble on the beach, not much more than a clot of foam being blown and rolled over the sand," he said to himself.

She seemed to move very slowly across the vast sounding shore. As he watched, he lost her. She was dazzling out of sight by the sunshine. Again he saw her, a merest white speck moving against the white, wavy sea-edge.

"Look how little she is!" he said to himself. "She's like a grain of sand in the beach — just a concentrated speck blown along, a tiny white foam-bubble, almost nothing among the morning. Why does she orbit me?"

The morning was altogether uninterrupted: she was in the water. Far and wide the beach, the sands with their blue marrain, the shining water, glowed either in immense, unbroken solitude.

"What is she, after all?" he said to himself. "Here's sea-coast morning, big and permanent and beautiful; here is she, fretting, always unsatisfied, and temporary a bubble of foam. What does she mean to me, after She represents something, like a bubble of foam represents the sea. But what is *she*? It's not her I care for."

Then, startled by his own unconscious thoughts, that seemed to speak so distinctly that all the morning could hear, he undressed and ran quickly down the sands. She was watching for him. Her arm flashed up to him, she swam on a wave, subsided, her shoulders in a pool of liquid silver. He jumped through the breakers, and in moment her hand was on his shoulder.

He was a poor swimmer, and could not stay long in the water. She played round him in triumph, sporting with her superiority, which he begrudged her. The sun-shine stood deep and fine on the water. They laughed in the sea for a minute or two, then raced each other back to the sandhills.

When they were drying themselves, panting heavily, he watched her laughing, breathless face, her bright shoulders, her breasts that swayed and made him frightened. She rubbed them, and he thought again:

"But she is magnificent, and even bigger than the morning and the sea. Is she — ? is she — ?"

She, seeing his dark eyes fixed on her, broke off from drying with a laugh.

"What are you looking at?" she said.

" You," he answered, laughing.

Her eyes met his, and in a moment he was kissing her white "goose-fleshed" shoulder, and thinking:

" What is she? What is she? "

She loved him in the morning. There was something detached, hard, and elemental about his kisses then, if he were only conscious of his own will, not in the least of her and her wanting him.

Later in the day he went out sketching.

" You," he said to her, " go with your mother Sutton. I am so dull."

She stood and looked at him. He knew she wanted to come with him, but he preferred to be alone. She made him feel imprisoned when she was there, as if he could not get a free deep breath, as if there were something on top of him. She felt his desire to be free from her.

In the evening he came back to her. They walked down the shore in the darkness, then sat for awhile in the shelter of the sandhills.

" It seems," she said, as they stared over the darkness of the sea, where no light was to be seen—" seemed as if you only loved me at night—as if you did n't love me in the daytime."

He ran the cold sand through his fingers, feeling guilty under the accusation.

" The night is free to you," he replied. " In the day time I want to be by myself."

" But why?" she said. " Why, even now, when we are on this short holiday?"

" I don't know. Love-making stifles me in the daytime."

" But it need n't be always love-making," she said.

" It always is," he answered, " when you and I are together."

She sat feeling very bitter.

" Do you ever want to marry me?" he asked curiously.

" Do you me?" she replied.

"Yes, yes; I should like us to have children," he  
winded slowly.

She sat with her head bent, fingering the sand.

"But you don't really want a divorce from Baxter,  
you?" he said.

It was some minutes before she replied.

"No," she said, very deliberately; "I don't think  
so."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Do you feel as if you belonged to him?"

"No; I don't think so."

"What, then?"

"I think he belongs to me," she replied.

He was silent for some minutes, listening to the wind  
wing over the hoarse, dark sea.

"And you never really intended to belong to *me*?"  
he said.

"Yes, I do belong to you," she answered.

"No," he said; "because you don't want to be  
forced."

It was a knot they could not untie, so they left it,  
what they could get, and what they could not attain  
they ignored.

"I consider you treated Baxter rottenly," he said  
ther time.

He half expected Clara to answer him, as his mother  
had: "You consider your own affairs, and don't know  
much about other people's." But she took him se-  
nsibly, almost to his own surprise.

"Why?" she said.

"I suppose you thought he was a lily of the valley,  
so you put him in an appropriate pot, and tended  
according. You made up your mind he was a lily  
he valley, and it was no good his being a cow-parsnip.  
*I would n't have it.*"

*I certainly never imagined him a lily of the valley;  
You imagined him something he was n't. That's*

what a woman is. She thinks she knows what's good a man, and she's going to see he gets it; and no man if he's starving, he may sit and whistle for what he needs while she's got him, and is giving him what's good for him."

"And what are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm thinking what tune I shall whistle," he laughed.

And instead of boxing his ears, she considered him earnest.

"You think I want to give you what's good for you?" she asked.

"I hope so; but love should give a sense of freedom not of prison. Miriam made me feel tied up like a dog to a stake. I must feed on her patch, and nowhere can I go. It's sickening!"

"And would *you* let a *woman* do as she likes?"

"Yes; I'll see that she *likes* to love me. If she does — well, I don't hold her."

"If you were as wonderful as you say —," replied Clara.

"I should be the marvel I am," he laughed.

There was a silence in which they hated each other though they laughed.

"Love's a dog in the manger," he said.

"And which of us is the dog?"

"Oh well, you, of course."

So there went on a battle between them. She did not know him, she never fully had him. Some part, big and vital, she held over him, she had no hold over; nor did she ever try to hold him, or even to realize what it was. And he knew in some way that she held herself still as Mrs. Dawes. She had not loved Dawes, never had loved him; but she believed he loved her, at least depended on her. She felt a certain surety about him that she never felt with Morel. Her passion for the young man had filled her soul, given her a certain satisfaction, eased her of self-mistrust, her doubt. Whatever else she was, she was inwardly assured. It was almost as if she had

and stood now distinct and complete. She had her confirmation; but she never believed that belonged to Paul Morel, nor his to her. They separate in the end, and the rest of her life would be after him. But at any rate, she *knew* now, she of herself. And the same could almost be said

Together they had received the baptism of through the other; but now their missions were. Where he wanted to go she could not come m. They would have to part sooner or later. they married, and were faithful to each other, would have to leave her, go on alone, and she would ve to attend to him when he came home. But it possible. Each wanted a mate to go side by h.

had gone to live with her mother upon Mapperley

One evening, as Paul and she were walking along rough Road, they met Dawes. Morel knew ng about the bearing of the man approaching, was absorbed in his thinking at the moment, so y his artist's eye watched the form of the stranger. e suddenly turned to Clara with a laugh, and put d on her shoulder, saying, laughing:

"we walk side by side, and yet I'm in London with an imaginary Orpen; and where are you?" hat instant Dawes passed, almost touching Morel. ung man glanced, saw the dark brown eyes burn- l of hate and yet tired.

"Who was that?" he asked of Clara.

"It was Baxter," she replied.

took his hand from her shoulder and glanced then he saw again distinctly the man's form as oached him. Dawes still walked erect, with his ulders flung back, and his face lifted; but there urtive look in his eyes that gave one the impression trying to get unnoticed past every person he met, suspiciously to see what they thought of him hands seemed to be wanting to hide. He w

old clothes, the trousers were torn at the knee, and handkerchief tied round his throat was dirty; but cap was still defiantly over one eye. As she saw Clara felt guilty. There was a tiredness and dole on his face that made her hate him, because it was her.

"He looks shady," said Paul.

But the note of pity in his voice reproached her, made her feel hard.

"His true commonness comes out," she answered.

"Do you hate him?" he asked.

"You talk," she said, "about the cruelty of men. I wish you knew the cruelty of men in their brute! They simply don't know that the woman exists."

"Don't *I*?" he said.

"No," she answered.

"Don't I know you exist?"

"About *me* you know nothing," she said bitterly, "about *me!*"

"Not more than Baxter knew?" he asked.

"Perhaps not as much."

He felt puzzled, and helpless, and angry. They walked, unknown to him, though they had been through such experience together.

"But you know *me* pretty well," he said.

She did not answer.

"Did you know Baxter as well as you know me?" he asked.

"He would n't let me," she said.

"And I have let you know me?"

"It's what men *won't* let you do. They won't let you get really near to them," she said.

"And have n't I let you?"

"Yes," she answered slowly; "but you've never been near to me. You can't come out of yourself, you Baxter could do that better than you."

He walked on pondering. He was angry with her, referring Baxter to him.

" You begin to value Baxter now you 've not got him," said.

" No; I can only see where he was different from us."

But he felt she had a grudge against him.

One evening, as they were coming home over the fields, she startled him by asking:

" Do you think it 's worth it — the — the sex part? "

" The act of loving, itself? "

" Yes; is it worth anything to you? "

" But how can you separate it? " he said. " It 's the summation of everything. All our intimacy culminates in."

" Not for me," she said.

He was silent. A flash of hate for her came up. After she was dissatisfied with him, even there, where he thought they fulfilled each other. But he believed her implicitly.

" I feel," she continued slowly, " as if I had n't got you, as if all of you were n't there, and as if it were n't you were taking — "

" Who, then? "

" Something just for yourself. It has been fine, so at I dare n't think of it. But is it *me* you want, or is *It*? "

He again felt guilty. Did he leave Clara out of count, and take simply woman? But he thought that was letting a hair.

" When I had Baxter, actually had him, then I did feel as if I had all of him," she said.

" And it was better? " he asked.

" Yes, yes; it was more whole. I don't say you have n't given me more than he ever gave me."

" Or could give you."

" Yes, perhaps; but you 've never given me yourself."

*He knitted his brows angrily.*

" If I start to make love to you," he said, " I just let a leaf down the wind."

"And leave me out of count," she said.

"And then is it nothing to you?" he asked, rigid with chagrin.

"It's something; and sometimes you have carried away — right away — I know — and — I reverence for it — but —"

"Don't 'but' me," he said, kissing her quickly fire ran through him.

She submitted, and was silent.

It was true as he said. As a rule, when he s love-making, the emotion was strong enough to with it everything — reason, soul, blood — in a sweep, like the Trent carries bodily its back-swirl intertwinings, noiselessly. Gradually the little criti the little sensations, were lost, thought also went, thing borne along in one flood. He became, not a with a mind, but a great instinct. His hands were creatures, living; his limbs, his body, were all life consciousness, subject to no will of his, but living themselves. Just as he was, so it seemed the vigintry stars were strong also with life. He and struck with the same pulse of fire, and the same strength which held the bracken-frond stiff near him held his own body firm. It was as if he, and the and the dark herbage, and Clara were licked up immense tongue of flame, which tore onwards andwards. Everything rushed along in living beside everything was still, perfect in itself, along with This wonderful stillness in each thing in itself, w was being borne along in a very ecstasy of living, at the highest point of bliss.

And Clara knew this held him to her, so she tried altogether to the passion. It, however, failed her often. They did not often reach again the height that once when the peewits had called. Gradually mechanical effort spoilt their loving, or, when the splendid moments, they had them separately, and satisfactorily. So often he seemed merely to b

alone; often they realized it had been a failure, not at they had wanted. He left her, knowing that even-  
g had only made a little split between them. Their  
ing grew more mechanical, without the marvellous  
mour. Gradually they began to introduce novelties,  
get back some of the feeling of satisfaction. They  
uld be very near, almost dangerously near to the river,  
that the black water ran not far from his face, and it  
ve a little thrill; or they loved sometimes in a little hole  
below the fence of the path where people were passing  
asionally, on the edge of the town, and they heard  
tsteps coming, almost felt the vibration of the tread,  
they heard what the passers-by said — strange little  
ngs that were never intended to be heard. And after-  
rds each of them was rather ashamed, and these things  
used a distance between the two of them. He began  
despise her a little, as if she had merited it!

One night he left her to go to Daybrook Station over fields. It was very dark, with an attempt at snow, though the spring was so far advanced. Morel had much time; he plunged forward. The town ceases most abruptly on the edge of a steep hollow; there houses with their yellow lights stand up against the darkness. He went over the stile, and dropped quickly into the hollow of the fields. Under the orchard one window shone in Swineshead Farm. Paul glanced round. Behind, the houses stood on the brim of the black against the sky, like wild beasts glaring furiously with yellow eyes down into the darkness. It was the town that seemed savage and uncouth, glaring through the clouds at the back of him. Some creature stirred under the willows of the farm pond. It was too dark to distinguish anything.

He was close up to the next stile before he saw a dark shape leaning against it. The man moved aside.

“Good-evening!” he said.

“Good-evening!” Morel answered, not noticing.  
“Paul Morel?” said the man.

Then he knew it was Dawes. The man stopped his way.

"I've got yer, have I?" he said awkwardly.

"I shall miss my train," said Paul.

He could see nothing of Dawes' face. The man's teeth seemed to chatter as he talked.

"You're going to get it from me now," said Dawes.

Morel attempted to move forward; the other man stepped in front of him.

"Are yer goin' to take that top-coat off," he said, "or are you goin' to lie down to it?"

Paul was afraid the man was mad.

"But," he said, "I don't know how to fight."

"All right, then," answered Dawes, and before the younger man knew where he was he was staggering backwards from a blow across the face.

The whole night went black. He tore off his overcoat and coat, dodging a blow, and flung the garments over Dawes. The latter swore savagely. Morel, in his shirt sleeves, was now alert and furious. He felt his whole body unsheathe itself like a claw. He could not fight, so he would use his wits. The other man became more distinct to him; he could see particularly the shirt-breast. Dawes stumbled over Paul's coats, then came rushing forward. The young man's mouth was bleeding. It was the other man's mouth he was dying to get at, and the desire was anguish in its strength. He stepped quickly through the stile, and as Dawes was coming through after him, like a flash he got a blow in over the other's mouth. He shivered with pleasure. Dawes advanced slowly, spitting. Paul was afraid; he moved round to get to the stile again. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, came a great blow against his ear, that sent him falling helpless backwards. He heard Dawes' heavy panting, like a wild beast's; then came a kick on his knee giving him such agony that he got up and, quite blind, leapt clean under his enemy's guard. He felt blows and kicks, but they did not hurt. He hung on to the bar

an like a wild cat, till at last Dawes fell with a crash, sing his presence of mind. Paul went down with him. re instinct brought his hands to the man's neck, and fore Dawes, in frenzy and agony, could wrench him e, he had got his fists twisted in the scarf and his uckles dug in the throat of the other man. He was pure instinct, without reason or feeling. His body, d and wonderful in itself, cleaved against the strug- g body of the other man; not a muscle in him re- ed. He was quite unconscious, only his body had en upon itself to kill this other man. For himself, he d neither feeling nor reason. He lay pressed hard ainst his adversary, his body adjusting itself to its e pure purpose of choking the other man, resisting actly at the right moment, with exactly the right ount of strength, the struggles of the other, silent, int, unchanging, gradually pressing its knuckles deeper, sing the struggles of the other body become wilder and re frenzied. Tighter and tighter grew his body, like screw that is gradually increasing in pressure, till mething breaks.

Then suddenly he relaxed, full of wonder and misgiving. wes had been yielding. Morel felt his body flame with in, as he realized what he was doing; he was all be- dered. Dawes' struggles suddenly renewed themselves a furious spasm. Paul's hands were wrenched, torn out the scarf in which they were knotted, and he was flung way, helpless. He heard the horrid sound of the other's asping, but he lay stunned; then, still dazed, he felt he blows of the other's feet, and lost consciousness.

Dawes, grunting with pain like a beast, was kicking he prostrate body of his rival. Suddenly the whistle of he train shrieked two fields away. He turned round and glared suspiciously. What was coming? He saw he lights of the train draw across his vision. It seemed o him people were approaching. He made off across the eld into Nottingham, and dimly in his consciousness he went, he felt on his foot the place where his b

had knocked against one of the lad's bones. The pain seemed to re-echo inside him; he hurried to get away from it.

Morel gradually came to himself. He knew where he was and what had happened, but he did not want to move. He lay still, with tiny bits of snow tickling his face. It was pleasant to lie quite, quite still. The time passed. It was the bits of snow that kept rousing him when he did not want to be roused. At last his eyes clicked into action.

"I must n't lie here," he said; "it's silly."

But still he did not move.

"I said I was going to get up," he repeated. "I don't I?"

And still it was some time before he had sufficient strength to pull himself together to stir; then gradually he got up. Pain made him sick and dazed, but his brain became clear. Reeling, he groped for his coats and got them on, buttoning his overcoat up to his ears. It was some time before he found his cap. He did not know whether his face was still bleeding. Walking blindly, every step making him sick with pain, he went back to the house and washed his face and hands. The icy water hurt, but it helped to bring him back to himself. He crawled his way up the hill to the tram. He wanted to get to his mother — he must get to his mother — that was his blind instinct. He covered his face as much as he could, struggled sickly along. Continually the ground seemed to fall away from him as he walked, and he felt himself dropping with a sickening feeling into space; so, in a nightmare, he got through with the journey home.

Everybody was in bed. He looked at himself. His face was discoloured and smeared with blood, almost like a dead man's face. He washed it, and went to bed. The night went by in delirium. In the morning he found his mother looking at him. Her blue eyes — they were all he wanted to see. She was there; he was safe in her hands.

"It's not much, mother," he said. "It was Baxter wes."

"Tell me where it hurts you," she said quietly.

"I don't know — my shoulder. Say it was a bicycle ident, mother."

He could not move his arm. Presently Minnie, the le servant, came upstairs with some tea.

"Your mother's nearly frightened me out of my wits fainted away," she said.

He felt he could not bear it. His mother nursed him; told her about it.

"And now I should have done with them all," she said etly.

"I will, mother."

She covered him up.

"And don't think about it," she said — "only try to to sleep. The doctor won't be here till eleven."

He had a dislocated shoulder, and the second day acute nchitis set in. His mother was pale as death now, I very thin. She would sit and look at him, then ay into space. There was something between them t neither dared mention. Clara came to see him. terwards he said to his mother:

"She makes me tired, mother."

"Yes; I wish she would n't come," Mrs. Morel replied. Another day Miriam came, but she seemed almost like stranger to him.

"You know, I don't care about them, mother," he I.

"I'm afraid you don't, my son," she replied ly.

It was given out everywhere that it was a bicycle ident. Soon he was able to go to work again, but r there was a constant sickness and gnawing at his rt. He went to Clara, but there seemed, as it were, ody there. He could not work. He and his mother ed almost to avoid each other. There was sor et between them which they could not bear. He

not aware of it. He only knew that his life seemed unbalanced, as if it were going to smash into pieces.

Clara did not know what was the matter with him. She realized that he seemed unaware of her. Even when he came to her he seemed unaware of her; always he was somewhere else. She felt she was clutching for him and he was somewhere else. It tortured her, and so it tortured him. For a month at a time she kept him at arm's length. He almost hated her, and was driven to her in spite of himself. He went mostly into the company of men, was always at the George or the White Horse. His mother was ill, distant, quiet, shadowy. He was terrified of something; he dared not look at her. Her eyes seemed to grow darker, her face more waxen; still she dragged about at her work.

At Whitsuntide he said he would go to Blackpool for four days with his friend Newton. The latter was a big, jolly fellow, with a touch of the bounder about him. Paul said his mother must go to Sheffield to stay a week with Annie, who lived there. Perhaps the change would do her good. Mrs. Morel was attending a woman's doctor in Nottingham. He said her heart and her digestion were wrong. She consented to go to Sheffield, though she did not want to; but now she would do everything her son wished of her. Paul said he would come for her on the fifth day, and stay also in Sheffield till the holiday was up. It was agreed.

The two young men set off gaily for Blackpool. Mrs. Morel was quite lively as Paul kissed her and left her. Once at the station, he forgot everything. Four days were clear—not an anxiety, not a thought. The two young men simply enjoyed themselves. Paul was like another man. None of himself remained—no Clara, no Miriam, no mother that fretted him. He wrote to them all, and long letters to his mother; but they were jolly letters that made her laugh. He was having a good time, as young fellows will in a place like Blackpool. And underneath it all was a shadow for her.

Paul was very gay, excited at the thought of staying with his mother in Sheffield. Newton was to spend the day with them. Their train was late. Joking, laughing, with their pipes between their teeth, the young men swung their bags on to the tram-car. Paul had bought his mother a little collar of real lace that he wanted to see her wear, so that he could tease her about it.

Annie lived in a nice house, and had a little maid. Paul ran gaily up the steps. He expected his mother laughing in the hall, but it was Annie who opened to him. She seemed distant to him. He stood a second in dismay. Annie let him kiss her cheek.

"Is my mother ill?" he said.

"Yes; she's not very well. Don't upset her."

"Is she in bed?"

"Yes."

And then the queer feeling went over him, as if all the sunshine had gone out of him, and it was all shadow. He dropped the bag and ran upstairs. Hesitating, he opened the door. His mother sat up in bed, wearing a dressing-gown of old rose colour. She looked at him almost as if she were ashamed of herself, pleading to him, humble. He saw the ashy look about her.

"Mother!" he said.

"I thought you were never coming," she answered gaily.

But he only fell on his knees at the bedside, and buried his face in the bedclothes, crying in agony, and saying:

"Mother — mother — mother!"

She stroked his hair slowly with her thin hand.

"Don't cry," she said. "Don't cry — it's nothing."

But he felt as if his blood was melting into tears, and he cried in terror and pain.

"Don't — don't cry," his mother faltered.

Slowly she stroked his hair. Shocked out of himself he cried, and the tears hurt in every fibre of his body. Suddenly he stopped, but he dared not lift his face from the bedclothes.

"You *are* late. Where have you been?" his mother asked.

"The train was late," he replied, muffled in sheet.

"Yes; that miserable Central! Is Newton coming?"

"Yes."

"I'm sure you must be hungry, and they've got dinner waiting."

With a wrench he looked up at her.

"What is it, mother?" he asked brutally.

She averted her eyes as she answered:

"Only a bit of a tumour, my boy. You need no trouble. It's been there — the lump has — a long time."

Up came the tears again. His mind was clear and hard, but his body was crying.

"Where?" he said.

She put her hand on her side.

"Here. But you know they can sweat a tumour away."

He stood feeling dazed and helpless, like a child. He thought perhaps it was as she said. Yes; he reassured himself it was so. But all the while his blood and body knew definitely what it was. He sat down on bed, and took her hand. She had never had but the ring — her wedding-ring.

"When were you poorly?" he asked.

"It was yesterday it began," she answered missively.

"Pains!"

"Yes; but not more than I've often had at home. I believe Dr. Ansell is an alarmist."

"You ought not to have travelled alone," he said to himself more than to her.

"As if that had anything to do with it!" she answered quickly.

They were silent for a while.

"Now go and have your dinner," she said. "You must be hungry."

"Have you had yours?"

"Yes; a beautiful sole I had. Annie *is* good to me." They talked a little while, then he went downstairs. He was very white and strained. Newton sat in miserable sympathy.

After dinner he went into the scullery to help Annie wash up. The little maid had gone on an errand.  
"Is it really a tumour?" he asked.

Annie began to cry again.

"The pain she had yesterday—I never saw anybody suffer like it!" she cried. "Leonard ran like a madman to Dr. Ansell, and when she'd got to bed she said to me: 'Annie, look at this lump on my side. I wonder what it is?' And there I looked, and I thought I should have dropped. Paul, as true as I'm here, it's a lump big as my double fist. I said: 'Good gracious, mother, where did that come?' 'Why, child,' she said, 'it's been there a long time.' I thought I should have died, but Paul, I did. She's been having these pains for months at home, and nobody looking after her."

The tears came to his eyes, then dried suddenly.

"But she's been attending the doctor in Nottingham and she never told me," he said.

"If I'd have been at home," said Annie, "I should have seen for myself."

He felt like a man walking in unrealities. In the afternoon he went to see the doctor. The latter was a shrewd, able man.

"But what is it?" he said.

The doctor looked at the young man, then knitted his fingers.

"It may be a large tumour which has formed in the membrane," he said slowly, "and which we *may* be able to make go away."

"Can't you operate?" asked Paul.

"Not there," replied the doctor.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite!"

Paul meditated a while.

"Are you sure it's a tumour?" he asked. "Did Dr. Jameson in Nottingham never find out anything about it? She's been going to him for weeks, and treated her for heart and indigestion."

"Mrs. Morel never told Dr. Jameson about the lump," said the doctor.

"And do you know it's a tumour?"

"No, I am not sure."

"What else might it be? You asked my sister if there was cancer in the family. Might it be cancer?"

"I don't know."

"And what shall you do?"

"I should like an examination, with Dr. Jameson."

"Then have one."

"You must arrange about that. His fee would be at least than ten guineas to come here from Nottingham."

"When would you like him to come?"

"I will call in this evening, and we will talk it over." Paul went away, biting his lip.

His mother could come downstairs for tea, the doctor said. Her son went upstairs to help her. She wore the rose dressing-gown that Leonard had given Annie, with a little colour in her face, was quite young again.

"But you look quite pretty in that," he said.

"Yes; they make me so fine, I hardly know myself," she answered.

But when she stood up to walk, the colour went. Paul helped her, half carrying her. At the top of the stairs she was gone. He lifted her up and carried her quietly downstairs; laid her on the couch. She was light and frail. Her face looked as if she were dead, with the lips shut tight. Her eyes opened — her blue, unfriendly eyes — and she looked at him pleadingly, almost wanting him to forgive her. He held brandy to her lips, but her mouth would not open. All the time she watched him intently. She was only sorry for him. The tears ran down his face without ceasing, but not a muscle moved. He was intent on getting a little brandy between her lips.

He was able to swallow a teaspoonful. She lay back, soiled. The tears continued to run down his face.

"But," she panted, "it'll go off. Don't cry!"

"I'm not doing," he said.

After a while she was better again. He was kneeling beside the couch. They looked into each other's eyes.

"I don't want you to make a trouble of it," she said.

"No, mother. You'll have to be quite still, and then I'll get better soon."

But he was white to the lips, and their eyes as they looked at each other understood. Her eyes were so blue such a wonderful forget-me-not blue! He felt if only they had been of a different colour he could have borne it better. His heart seemed to be ripping slowly in his breast. He kneeled there, holding her hand, and neither said anything. Then Annie came in.

"Are you all right?" she murmured timidly to her mother.

"Of course," said Mrs. Morel.

Paul sat down and told her about Blackpool. She was anxious.

A day or two after, he went to see Dr. Jameson in Nottingham, to arrange for a consultation. Paul had practically no money in the world. But he could borrow.

His mother had been used to go to the public consultation on Saturday morning, when she could see the doctor for only a nominal sum. Her son went on the same day. The waiting-room was full of poor women, who sat patiently on a bench around the wall. Paul thought of his mother, in her little black costume, sitting waiting like these. The doctor was late. The women all looked rather frightened. Paul asked the nurse in attendance if he could see the doctor immediately he came. It was arranged so. The women sitting patiently round the walls of the room eyed the young man curiously.

At last the doctor came. He was about forty, good-looking, brown-skinned. His wife had died, and he, who loved her, had specialized on women's ailments. P.

told his name and his mother's. The doctor did not remember.

"Number forty-six M.," said the nurse; and the doctor looked up the case in his book.

"There is a big lump that may be a tumour," said Paul. "But Dr. Ansell was going to write you a letter."

"Ah, yes!" replied the doctor, drawing the letter from his pocket. He was very friendly, affable, busy, kind. I would come to Sheffield the next day.

"What is your father?" he asked.

"He is a coal-miner," replied Paul.

"Not very well off, I suppose?"

"This — I see after this," said Paul.

"And you?" smiled the doctor.

"I am a clerk in Jordan's Appliance Factory."

The doctor smiled at him.

"Er — to go to Sheffield!" he said, putting the tips of his fingers together, and smiling with his eyes. "Eight guineas?"

"Thank you!" said Paul, flushing and rising. "And you'll come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow — Sunday? Yes! Can you tell me about what time there is a train in the afternoon?"

"There is a Central gets in at four-fifteen."

"And will there be any way of getting up to the house? Shall I have to walk?" The doctor smiled.

"There is the tram," said Paul; "the Western Park tram."

The doctor made a note of it.

"Thank you!" he said, and shook hands.

Then Paul went on home to see his father, who had left in the charge of Minnie. Walter Morel was getting very grey now. Paul found him digging in the garden. He had written him a letter. He shook hands with his father.

"Hello, son! Tha has landed, then?" said the father.

"Yes," replied the son. "But I'm going back again."

"Are ter, beguy!" exclaimed the collier. "An' has ter ten owt?"

"No."

"That's just like me," said Morel. "Come thy ways"

The father was afraid of the mention of his wife. The boy went indoors. Paul ate in silence; his father, with both hands, and sleeves rolled up, sat in the arm-chair opposite and looked at him.

"Well, an' how is she?" asked the miner at length, in a little voice.

"She can sit up; she can be carried down for tea," said Paul.

"That's a blessin'!" exclaimed Morel. "I hope we soon be havin' her whoam, then. An' what's that Tittingham doctor say?"

"He's going to-morrow to have an examination of her."

"Is he, beguy! That's a tidy penny, I'm thinkin'!"

"Eight guineas."

"Eight guineas!" The miner spoke breathlessly. "Well, we mun find it from somewhere."

"I can pay that," said Paul.

There was a silence between them for some time.

"She says she hopes you're getting on all right with Minnie," Paul said.

"Yes, I'm all right, an' I wish as she was," answered Morel. "But Minnie's a good little wench, bless 'er art!" He sat looking dismal.

"I s'll have to be going at half-past three," said Paul.

"It's a trapse for thee, lad! Eight guineas! An' then dost think she'll be able to get as far as this?"

"We must see what the doctors say to-morrow," Paul said.

Morel sighed deeply. The house seemed strangely empty, and Paul thought his father looked lost, forlorn, and old.

"*You'll have to go and see her next week, father!*" b

"I hope she 'll be a-whoam by that time," said M.  
 "If she 's not," said Paul, "then you must come."  
 "I dunno wheer I s'll find th' money," said Mo.  
 "And I 'll write to you what the doctor says,"  
 Paul.

"But tha writes i' such a fashion, I canna ma'e it  
 said Morel.

"Well, I 'll write plain."

It was no good asking Morel to answer, for he  
 scarcely do more than write his own name.

The doctor came. Leonard felt it his duty to  
 him with a cab. The examination did not take  
 Annie, Arthur, Paul, and Leonard were waiting i  
 parlour anxiously. The doctors came down. Paul gl  
 at them. He had never had any hope, except wh  
 had deceived himself.

"It *may* be a tumour; we must wait and see," sai  
 Jameson.

"And if it is," said Annie, "can you sweal it aw  
 "Probably," said the doctor.

Paul put eight sovereigns and a half sovereign o  
 table. The doctor counted them, took a florin out  
 purse, and put that down.

"Thank you!" he said. "I 'm sorry Mrs. More  
 ill. But we must see what we can do."

"There can't be an operation?" said Paul.

The doctor shook his head.

"No," he said; "and even if there could, her  
 would n't stand it."

"Is her heart risky?" asked Paul.

"Yes; you must be careful with her."

"Very risky?"

"No — er — no, no! Just take care."

And the doctor was gone.

Then Paul carried his mother downstairs. Sh  
 simply, like a child. But when he was on the stair  
 put her arms round his neck, clinging.

"I 'm so frightened of these beastly stairs;"

and he was frightened, too. He would let Leonard do  
nother time. He felt he could not carry her.

"He thinks it's only a tumour!" cried Annie to her  
her. "And he can sweat it away."

"I knew he could," protested Mrs. Morel scornfully.  
he pretended not to notice that Paul had gone out of  
room. He sat in the kitchen, smoking. Then he tried  
brush some grey ash off his coat. He looked again.  
was one of his mother's grey hairs. It was so long!  
held it up, and it drifted into the chimney. He let

The long grey hair floated and was gone in the black-  
of the chimney.

The next day he kissed her before going back to work.  
was very early in the morning, and they were alone.

"You won't fret, my boy!" she said.  
No, mother."

No; it would be silly. And take care of yourself."

"Yes," he answered. Then, after a while: "And I  
ll come next Saturday, and shall I bring my  
her?"

"I suppose he wants to come," she replied. "At any  
e, if he does you'll have to let him."

He kissed her again, and stroked the hair from her tem-  
s, gently, tenderly, as if she were a lover.

"Shan't you be late?" she murmured.

"I'm going," he said, very low.

Still he sat a few minutes, stroking the brown and grey  
r from her temples.

"And you won't be any worse, mother?"

"No, my son."

"You promise me?"

"Yes; I won't be any worse."

He kissed her, held her in his arms for a moment, and  
s gone. In the early sunny morning he ran to the  
tion, crying all the way; he did not know what for.  
d her blue eyes were wide and staring as she thought of

"In the afternoon he went a walk with Clara. They

in the little wood where bluebells were standing. He took her hand.

"You 'll see," he said to Clara, "she 'll never be better."

"Oh, you don't know!" replied the other.

"I do," he said.

She caught him impulsively to her breast.

"Try and forget it, dear," she said; "try and forget it."

"I will," he answered.

Her breast was there, warm for him; her hands were in his hair. It was comforting, and he held his arms round her. But he did not forget. He only talked to Clara of something else. And it was always so. When she felt ill coming, the agony, she cried to him:

"Don't think of it, Paul! Don't think of it, my darling!"

And she pressed him to her breast, rocked him, soothed him like a child. So he put the trouble aside for her sake to take it up again immediately he was alone. All the time, as he went about, he cried mechanically. His mind and hands were busy. He cried, he did not know why. It was his blood weeping. He was just as much alone whether he was with Clara or with the men in the White Horse. Just himself and this pressure inside him, that was all that existed. He read sometimes. He had to keep his mind occupied. And Clara was a way of occupying his mind.

On the Saturday Walter Morel went to Sheffield. He was a forlorn figure, looking rather as if nobody owned him. Paul ran upstairs.

"My father 's come," he said, kissing his mother.

"Has he?" she answered weariedly.

The old collier came rather frightened into the bedroom.

"How dun I find thee, lass?" he said, going forward and kissing her in a hasty, timid fashion.

"Well, I 'm middlin'," she replied.

"I see tha art," he said. He stood looking down

r. Then he wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. Helpless, and as if nobody owned him, he looked.

"Have you gone on all right?" asked the wife, rather warily, as if it were an effort to talk to him.

"Yis," he answered. "'Er's a bit behint-hand now and again, as yer might expect."

"Does she have your dinner ready?" asked Mrs. Morel.

"Well, I've 'ad to shout at 'er once or twice," he said.

"And you *must* shout at her if she's not ready. She'll leave things to the last minute."

She gave him a few instructions. He sat looking at her as if she were almost a stranger to him, before whom he was awkward and humble, and also as if he had lost his sense of mind, and wanted to run. This feeling that wanted to run away, that he was on thorns to be gone from so trying a situation, and yet must linger because it ked better, made his presence so trying. He put up his brows for misery, and clenched his fists on his knees, being so awkward in presence of a big trouble.

Mrs. Morel did not change much. She stayed in Sheffield for two months. If anything, at the end she was rather worse. But she wanted to go home. Annie had children. Mrs. Morel wanted to go home. So they took a motor-car from Nottingham — for she was too ill to go by train — and she was driven through the sunne. It was just August; everything was bright and warm. Under the blue sky they could all see she was ring. Yet she was jollier than she had been for weeks. They all laughed and talked.

"Annie," she exclaimed, "I saw a lizard dart on that rock!"

Her eyes were so quick; she was still so full of life.

Morel knew she was coming. He had the front-door open. Everybody was on tiptoe. Half the street turned out. They heard the sound of the great motor-car. Mrs. Morel, smiling, drove home down the street.

"*And just look at them all come out to see me!*" said. "But there, I suppose I should have done the sa-

How do you do, Mrs. Matthews? How are you, Harrison?"

They none of them could hear, but they saw her and nod. And they all saw death on her face, they It was a great event in the street.

Morel wanted to carry her indoors, but he was to Arthur took her as if she were a child. They had s a big, deep chair by the hearth where her rocking used to stand. When she was unwrapped and seated had drunk a little brandy, she looked round the roo

"Don't think I did n't like your house, Annie," she "but it's nice to be in my own home again."

And Morel answered huskily:

"It is, lass, it is."

And Minnie, the little quaint maid, said:

"An' we glad t' 'ave yer."

There was a lovely yellow ravel of sunflowers i garden. She looked out of the window.

"There are my sunflowers!" she said.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE RELEASE

BY the way," said Dr. Ansell one evening when Morel was in Sheffield, "we've got a man in the fever hospital here who comes from Nottingham — Dawes. He es n't seem to have many belongings in this world."

"Baxter Dawes!" Paul exclaimed.

"That's the man — has been a fine fellow, physically, should think. Been in a bit of a mess lately. You know m?"

"He used to work at the place where I am."

"Did he? Do you know anything about him? He's st sulking, or he'd be a lot better than he is by now."

"I don't know anything of his home circumstances, except that he's separated from his wife and has been a bit wn, I believe. But tell him about me, will you? Tell n I'll come and see him."

The next time Morel saw the doctor he said:

"And what about Dawes?"

"I said to him," answered the other, "'Do you know man from Nottingham named Morel?' and he looked me as if he'd jump at my throat. So I said, 'I see u know the name; it's Paul Morel.' Then I told him but your saying you would go and see him. 'What does want?' he said, as if you were a policeman."

"And did he say he would see me?" asked Paul.

"He would n't say anything — good, bad, or indiffer-  
e," replied the doctor.

"Why not?"

"That's what I want to know. There he lies and sulks,  
r in, day out. Can't get a word of information ou  
im."

"Do you think I might go?" asked Paul.

"You might."

There was a feeling of connection between the rival more than ever since they had fought. In a way I felt guilty towards the other, and more or less responsible. And being in such a state of soul himself, he felt an almost painful nearness to Dawes, who was suffering and despairing, too. Besides, they had met in a naked extremity, and it was a bond. At any rate, the elemental in each had met.

He went down to the isolation hospital, with Ansell's card. The sister, a healthy young Irishwoman, led him down the ward.

"A visitor to see you, Jim Crow," she said.

Dawes turned over suddenly with a startled grunt.  
"Eh?"

"Caw!" she mocked. "He can only say 'Caw' have brought you a gentleman to see you. Now 'Thank you,' and show some manners."

Dawes looked swiftly with his dark, startled eyes beyond the sister at Paul. His look was full of fear, trust, hate, and misery. Morel met the swift, dark eyes and hesitated. The two men were afraid of themselves they had been.

"Dr. Ansell told me you were here," said Morel, taking out his hand.

Dawes mechanically shook hands.

"So I thought I'd come in," continued Paul.

There was no answer. Dawes lay staring at the opposite wall.

"Say 'Caw!'" mocked the nurse. "Say 'Caw!' Crow."

"He is getting on all right?" said Paul to her.

"Oh yes! He lies and imagines he's going to die," said the nurse, "and it frightens every word out of his mouth."

"And you must have somebody to talk to?" asked Morel.

"That's it!" laughed the nurse. "Only two old men a boy who always cries. It is hard lines! Here am I g to hear Jim Crow's voice, and nothing but an odd w!" will he give!"

"So rough on you!" said Morel:  
Is n't it?" said the nurse.

"I suppose I am a godsend," he laughed.  
Oh, dropped straight from heaven!" laughed the e.

resently she left the two men alone. Dawes was thin-  
and handsome again, but life seemed low in him. As  
Doctor said, he was lying sulking, and would not move  
ard towards convalescence. He seemed to grudge  
y beat of his heart.

"Have you had a bad time?" asked Paul.  
ddenly again Dawes looked at him.

"What are you doin' in Sheffield?" he asked.

"My mother was taken ill at my sister's in Thurston  
et. What are you doing here?"  
here was no answer.

"How long have you been in?" Morel asked.  
I could n't say for sure," Dawes answered grudgingly.  
e lay staring across at the wall opposite, as if trying  
elieve Morel was not there. Paul felt his heart go  
and angry.

"Dr. Ansell told me you were here," he said coldly.  
he other man did not answer.

"Typhoid's pretty bad, I know," Morel persisted.  
ddenly Dawes said:

"What did you come for?"

"Because Dr. Ansell said you did n't know anybody  
. Do you?"

I know nobody nowhere," said Dawes.

"Well," said Paul, "it's because you don't choose to,  
,"

here was another silence.

*We'll be taking my mother home as soon as we can.*  
*Paul.*

"What's a-matter with her?" asked Dawes, with sick man's interest in illness.

"She's got a cancer."

There was another silence.

"But we want to get her home," said Paul. "We'll have to get a motor-car."

Dawes lay thinking.

"Why don't you ask Thomas Jordan to lend you his?" said Dawes.

"It's not big enough," Morel answered.

Dawes blinked his dark eyes as he lay thinking.

"Then ask Jack Pilkington; he'd lend it you. You know him."

"I think I'll hire one," said Paul.

"You're a fool if you do," said Dawes.

The sick man was gaunt and handsome again. Paul was sorry for him because his eyes looked so tired.

"Did you get a job here?" he asked.

"I was only here a day or two before I was taken bad," Dawes replied.

"You want to get in a convalescent home," said Paul.

The other's face clouded again.

"I'm goin' in no convalescent home," he said.

"My father's been in the one at Seathorpe, an' he liked it. Dr. Ansell would get you a recommend."

Dawes lay thinking. It was evident he dared not face the world again.

"The seaside would be all right just now," Morel said. "Sun on those sandhills, and the waves not far out."

The other did not answer.

"By Gad!" Paul concluded, too miserable to both much; "it's all right when you know you're going walk again, and swim!"

Dawes glanced at him quickly. The man's dark eyes were afraid to meet any other eyes in the world. But the real misery and helplessness in Paul's tone gave him a feeling of relief.

"Is she far gone?" he asked.

"She's going like wax," Paul answered; "but cheerful-lively!"

He bit his lip. After a minute he rose.

"Well, I'll be going," he said. "I'll leave you this halfcrown."

"I don't want it," Dawes muttered.

Morel did not answer, but left the coin on the table.

"Well," he said, "I'll try and run in when I'm back Sheffield. Happen you might like to see my brother-law? He works in Pyecrofts."

"I don't know him," said Dawes.

"He's all right. Should I tell him to come? He might bring you some papers to look at."

The other man did not answer. Paul went. The strong notion that Dawes aroused in him, repressed, made him sicker.

He did not tell his mother, but next day he spoke to Clara about this interview. It was in the dinner-hour. The two did not often go out together now, but this day he asked her to go with him to the Castle grounds. There they sat while the scarlet geraniums and the yellow calceolarias blazed in the sunlight. She was now always rather protective, and rather resentful towards him.

"Did you know Baxter was in Sheffield Hospital with phoid?" he asked.

She looked at him with startled grey eyes, and her face went pale.

"No," she said, frightened.

"He's getting better. I went to see him yesterday—the doctor told me."

Clara seemed stricken by the news.

"Is he very bad?" she asked guiltily.

"He has been. He's mending now."

"What did he say to you?"

"Oh, nothing! He seems to be sulking."

There was a distance between the two of them. He gave her more information.

*She went about shut up and silent. The next time*

took a walk together, she disengaged herself from his arm and walked at a distance from him. He was wanting her only comfort badly.

"Won't you be nice with me?" he asked.

She did not answer.

"What's the matter?" he said, putting his arm across her shoulder.

"Don't!" she said, disengaging herself.

He left her alone, and returned to his own brooding.

"Is it Baxter that upsets you?" he asked at length.

"I have been *vile* to him!" she said.

"I've said many a time you have n't treated him well," he replied.

And there was a hostility between them. Each pursued his own train of thought.

"I've treated him — no, I've treated him <sup>as</sup> badly," she said. "And now you treat *me* badly. It serves me right."

"How do I treat you badly?" he said.

"It serves me right," she repeated. "I never considered him worth having, and now you don't consider <sup>as</sup> me. But it serves me right. He loved me a thousand times better than you ever did."

"He did n't!" protested Paul.

"He did! At any rate, he did respect me, and that's what you don't do."

"It looked as if he respected you!" he said.

"He did! And I made him horrid — I know I did. You've taught me that. And he loved me a thousand times better than ever you do."

"All right," said Paul.

He only wanted to be left alone now. He had his own trouble, which was almost too much to bear. Clara only tormented him and made him tired. He was not sorry when he left her.

She went on the first opportunity to Sheffield to see her husband. The meeting was not a success. But she left him roses and fruit and money. She wanted to make restitution. It was not that she loved him. As she left

I m lying there her heart did not warm with love. she wanted to humble herself to him, to kneel before him. She wanted now to be self-sacrificial. After all, she failed to make Morel really love her. She was morally tainted. She wanted to do penance. So she kneeled to him, and it gave him a subtle pleasure. But the disease between them was still very great — too great. It tainted the man. It almost pleased the woman. She liked to feel she was serving him across an insuperable distance. She was proud now.

Morel went to see Dawes once or twice. There was a sense of friendship between the two men, who were all the same deadly rivals. But they never mentioned the woman who was between them.

Mrs. Morel got gradually worse. At first they used to stay her downstairs, sometimes even into the garden. She sat propped in her chair, smiling, and so pretty. Her gold wedding-ring shone on her white hand; her hair was carefully brushed. And she watched the tangled flowers dying, the chrysanthemums coming out, and dahlias.

Paul and she were afraid of each other. He knew, and she knew, that she was dying. But they kept up a pretence of cheerfulness. Every morning, when he got up, he went into her room in his pyjamas.

"Did you sleep, my dear?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered.

"Not very well?"

"Well, yes!"

Then he knew she had lain awake. He saw her hand under the bedclothes, pressing the place on her side where pain was.

"Has it been bad?" he asked.

"No. It hurt a bit, but nothing to mention."

And she sniffed in her old scornful way. As she lay looking like a girl. And all the while her blue eyes looked at him. But there were the dark pain-circles beneath that made him ache again.

"It's a sunny day," he said.

"It's a beautiful day."

"Do you think you'll be carried down?"

"I shall see."

Then he went away to get her breakfast. All day he was conscious of nothing but her. It was a long time that made him feverish. Then, when he got home in the early evening, he glanced through the kitchen window. She was not there; she had not got up.

He ran straight upstairs and kissed her. He was most afraid to ask:

"Did n't you get up, Pigeon?"

"No," she said. "It was that morphia; it made me tired."

"I think he gives you too much," he said.

"I think he does," she answered.

He sat down by the bed, miserably. She had a way of curling and lying on her side, like a child. The grey brown hair was loose over her ear.

"Does n't it tickle you?" he said, gently putting back.

"It does," she replied.

His face was near hers. Her blue eyes smiled straight into his, like a girl's — warm, laughing with tender. It made him pant with terror, agony, and love.

"You want your hair doing in a plait," he said. still."

And going behind her, he carefully loosened her hair and brushed it out. It was like fine long silk of brown and blonde. Her head was snuggled between her shoulders. A hand lightly brushed and plaited her hair, he bit his lip and felt dazed. It all seemed unreal, he could not understand it.

At night he often worked in her room, looking up from time to time. And so often he found her blue eyes looking at him. And when their eyes met, she smiled. He would go away again, mechanically, producing good stuff without knowing what he was doing.

metimes he came in, very pale and still, with watchful, keen eyes, like a man who is drunk almost to death. They were both afraid of the veils that were ripping before them.

When she pretended to be better, chattered to him, made a great fuss over some scraps of news. For they had both come to the condition when they had to give much of the trifles, lest they should give in to the thing, and their human independence would go smash. They were afraid, so they made light of things and were

Sometimes as she lay he knew she was thinking of the past. Her mouth gradually shut hard in a line. She was holding herself rigid, so that she might die without ever uttering the great cry that was tearing from her. He forgot that hard, utterly lonely and stubborn clenching of her mouth, which persisted for weeks. Sometimes, when it was lighter, she talked about her husband. Now she hated him. She did not forgive him. She could not bear him to be in the room. And a few things, the things she had been most bitter to her, came up again so strongly that they broke from her, and she told her son. He felt as if his life were being destroyed, piece by piece, within him. Often the tears came suddenly. He ran from the station, the tear-drops falling on the pavement, and he could not go on with his work. The pen stopped writing. He sat staring, quite unconscious. And when he came round again he felt sick, and trembled in his limbs. He never questioned what it was. His mind did not try to analyze or understand. He merely submitted, keeping his eyes shut; let the thing go over him.

His mother did the same. She thought of the pain, of morphine, of the next day; hardly ever of the death. It was coming, she knew. She had to submit to it. She would never entreat it or make friends with it. And, with her face shut hard and blind, she was pushed towards the door. The days passed, the weeks, the months.

Sometimes, in the sunny afternoons, she seemed almost happy.

"I try to think of the nice times — when we went Mablethorpe, and Robin Hood's Bay, and Shanklin," said. "After all, not everybody has seen those beautiful places. And was n't it beautiful! I try to think of the not of the other things."

Then, again, for a whole evening she spoke not a word; neither did he. They were together, rigid, stubbornly silent. He went into his room at last to go to bed, leaning against the doorway as if paralyzed, unable to go any farther. His consciousness went. A furious storm of rage and despair overcame him. He knew not what, seemed to ravage inside him. He stood leaning there, submitting, never questioning.

In the morning they were both normal again, though her face was grey with the morphia, and her body like ash. But they were bright again, nevertheless. Of course, especially if Annie or Arthur were at home, he neglected her. He did not see much of Clara. Usually he was with men. He was quick and active and lively; but when friends saw him go white to the gills, his eyes dark and glittering, they had a certain mistrust of him. Sometimes he went with Clara, but she was almost cold to him.

"Take me!" he said simply.

Occasionally she would. But she was afraid. When she had him then, there was something in it that made her shrink away from him — something unnatural. She used to dread him. He was so quiet, yet so strange. She was afraid of the man who was not there with her, whom she could feel behind this make-belief lover; somebody sinister that filled her with horror. She began to have a sort of horror of him. It was almost as if he were a criminal. He wanted her — he had her — and it made her feel as if death itself had her in its grip. She lay in his arms. There was no man there loving her. She almost pitied him. Then came little bouts of tenderness. But she dared not pity him.

Dawes had come to Colonel Seely's Home near

There Paul visited him sometimes, Clara very occasionally. Between the two men the friendship had died peculiarly. Dawes, who mended very slowly and was very feeble, seemed to leave himself in the hands of Paul.

At the beginning of November Clara reminded Paul that it was her birthday.

"I'd nearly forgotten," he said.

"I thought quite," she replied.

"No. Shall we go to the seaside for the week-end?" They went. It was cold and rather dismal. She waited for him to be warm and tender with her, instead of which he seemed hardly aware of her. He sat in the railway carriage, looking out, and was startled when she spoke to him.

He was not definitely thinking. Things seemed as if they did not exist. She went across to him.

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

"Nothing!" he said. "Don't those windmill sails look gaudy?"

He sat holding her hand. He could not talk nor think, as a comfort, however, to sit holding her hand. She was dissatisfied and miserable. He was not with her; she wanted nothing.

And in the evening they sat among the sandhills, looking at the black, heavy sea.

"She will never give in," he said quietly.

Clara's heart sank.

"No," she replied.

"There are different ways of dying. My father's people are frightened, and have to be hauled out of life into death like cattle into a slaughter-house, pulled by the horns; but my mother's people are pushed from behind, inch by inch. They are stubborn people, and won't die."

"Yes," said Clara.

"And she won't die. She can't. Mr. Renshaw, the doctor, was in the other day. 'Think!' he said to her; 'you will have your mother and father, and your sisters, and your son, in the Other Land.' And she said: 'I have

done without them for a long time, and *can do with* them now. It is the living I want, not the dead.<sup>D</sup> *wants to live even now.*"

"Oh, how horrible!" said Clara, too frightened to speak.

"And she looks at me, and she wants to stay with me," he went on monotonously. "She's got such a will, seems as if she would never go — never!"

"Don't think of it!" cried Clara.

"And she was religious — she is religious now — but I said to her on Thursday, 'Mother, if I had to die, I'd die. I'd *will* to die.' And she said to me, sharp: 'Do you think I have n't? Do you think you can die when you like?'"

His voice ceased. He did not cry, only went on speaking monotonously. Clara wanted to run. She looked round. There was the black, re-echoing shore, the dark sky down on her. She got up terrified. She wanted to be where there was light, where there were other people. She wanted to be away from him. He sat with his hands dropped, not moving a muscle.

"And I don't want her to eat," he said, "and I know it. When I ask her, 'Shall you have anything?' she's almost afraid to say 'Yes.' 'I'll have a cup of Benger's,' she says. 'It'll only keep your strength up,' I said to her. 'Yes' — and she almost cried — 'there's such a gnawing when I eat nothing, I can't bear it.' So I went and made her the food. It's the same that gnaws like that at her. I wish she'd die!"

"Come!" said Clara roughly. "I'm going."

He followed her down the darkness of the sands. He did not come to her. He seemed scarcely aware of his existence. And she was afraid of him, and disliked him.

In the same acute daze they went back to Nottingham. He was always busy, always doing something, always going from one to the other of his friends.

On the Monday he went to see Baxter Dawes. In

Pale, the man rose to greet the other, clinging to his  
as he held out his hand.

You should n't get up," said Paul.

Dawes sat down heavily, eyeing Morel with a sort of  
contumaciousness.

Don't you waste your time on me," he said, "if you've  
better to do."

I wanted to come," said Paul. "Here! I brought you  
some sweets."

The invalid put them aside.

It's not been much of a week-end," said Morel.

How's your mother?" asked the other.

Hardly any different."

I thought she was perhaps worse, being as you did n't  
see her on Sunday."

"I was at Skegness," said Paul. "I wanted a change."

The other looked at him with dark eyes. He seemed  
to be waiting, not quite daring to ask, trusting to be told.

"I went with Clara," said Paul.

"I knew as much," said Dawes quietly.

"It was an old promise," said Paul.

"You have it your own way," said Dawes.

This was the first time Clara had been definitely men-  
tioned between them.

"Nay," said Morel slowly; "she's tired of me."

Again Dawes looked at him.

"Since August she's been getting tired of me," Morel  
repeated.

The two men were very quiet together. Paul suggested  
a game of draughts. They played in silence.

"I s'll go abroad when my mother's dead," said Paul.

"Abroad!" repeated Dawes.

"Yes; I don't care what I do."

They continued the game. Dawes was winning.

"I s'll have to begin a new start of some sort," said  
Paul; "and you as well, I suppose."

He took one of Dawes' pieces.

"I dunno where," said the other,

"Things have to happen," Morel said. "It's no go doing anything — at least — no, I don't know. Give some toffee."

The two men ate sweets, and began another game draughts.

"What made that scar on your mouth?" asked Dawes. Paul put his hand hastily to his lips, and looked into the garden.

"I had a bicycle accident," he said. Dawes' hand trembled as he moved the piece.

"You should n't ha' laughed at me," he said very quickly.

"When?"

"That night on Woodborough Road, when you passed me — you with your hand on her shoulder."

"I never laughed at you," said Paul.

Dawes kept his fingers on the draught-piece.

"I never knew you were there till the very second you passed," said Morel.

"It was that as did me," he said, very low. Paul took another sweet.

"I never laughed," he said, "except as I'm a laughing."

They finished the game.  
That night Morel walked home from Nottingham in order to have something to do. The furnaces flared red blotch over Bulwell; the black clouds were like a ceiling. As he went along the ten miles of highroad he felt as if he were walking out of life, between the levels of the sky and the earth. But at the end was the sick-room. If he walked and walked for ever, it was only that place to come to.

He was not tired when he got near home, or he didn't know it. Across the field he could see the red fire leaping in her bedroom window.

"When she's dead," he said to himself, "that fire will go out."

He took off his boots quietly and crept upstairs. His mother's door was wide open, because she slept al-

red firelight dashed its glow on the landing. Soft as a low, he peeped in her doorway.

Paul!" she murmured.

His heart seemed to break again. He went in and sat by his bed.

"How late you are!" she murmured.

"Not very," he said.

"Why, what time is it?" The murmur came plaintive and helpless.

"It's only just gone eleven."

"That was not true; it was nearly one o'clock."

"Oh!" she said; "I thought it was later."

And he knew the unutterable misery of her nights that did not go.

"Can't you sleep, my pigeon?" he said.

"No, I can't," she wailed.

"Never mind, little!" he said crooning. "Never mind, my love. I'll stop with you half an hour, my son; then perhaps it will be better."

And he sat by the bedside, slowly, rhythmically stroking brows with his finger-tips, stroking her eyes shut, holding her, holding her fingers in his free hand. They could hear the sleepers' breathing in the other rooms.

"Now go to bed," she murmured, lying quite still under his fingers and his love.

"Will you sleep?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so."

"You feel better, my little, don't you?"

"Yes," she said, like a fretful, half-soothed child.

till the days and the weeks went by. He hardly ever used to see Clara now. But he wandered restlessly from person to another for some help, and there was none where. Miriam had written to him tenderly. He went to see her. Her heart was very sore when she saw him, gaunt, with his eyes dark and bewildered. Her pity took up, hurting her till she could not bear it.

"How is she?" she asked.

"The same — the same!" he said. "The doctor sa-

she can't last, but I know she will. She'll be here Christmas."

Miriam shuddered. She drew him to her; she pressed him to her bosom; she kissed him and kissed him. He submitted, but it was torture. She could not kiss him in agony. That remained alone and apart. She kissed his face, and roused his blood, while his soul was apart writhing with the agony of death. And she kissed him and fingered his body, till at last, feeling he would go mad if he got away from her. It was not that he wanted just then — not that. And she thought she had soothed him and done him good.

December came, and some snow. He stayed at home all the while now. They could not afford a nurse. Annie came to look after her mother; the parish nurse, whom they loved, came in morning and evening. Paul shared the nursing with Annie. Often, in the evenings, when friends were in the kitchen with them, they all laughed together and shook with laughter. It was reaction. Paul was so comical, Annie was so quaint. The whole party laughed till they cried, trying to subdue the sound. And Mrs. Morel, lying alone in the darkness, heard them, and among her bitterness was a feeling of relief.

Then Paul would go upstairs gingerly, guiltily, to see if she had heard.

"Shall I give you some milk?" he asked.

"A little," she replied plaintively.

And he would put some water with it, so that it should not nourish her. Yet he loved her more than his own life.

She had morphia every night, and her heart got fitful. Annie slept beside her. Paul would go in in the early morning, when his sister got up. His mother was wasted and almost ashen in the morning with the morphia. Darker and darker grew her eyes, all pupil, with the torture. In the mornings the weariness and ache were too much to bear. Yet she could not — would not — weep, even complain much.

" You slept a bit later this morning, little one," he  
ould say to her.

" Did I? " she answered, with fretful weariness.

" Yes; it 's nearly eight o'clock."

He stood looking out of the window. The whole coun-  
y was bleak and pallid under the snow. Then he felt her  
lse. There was a strong stroke and a weak one, like a  
nd and its echo. That was supposed to betoken the  
d. She let him feel her wrist, knowing what he wanted.  
Sometimes they looked in each other's eyes. Then they  
ost seemed to make an agreement. It was almost as  
he were agreeing to die also. But she did not consent  
die; she would not. Her body was wasted to a frag-  
ent of ash. Her eyes were dark and full of torture.

" Can't you give her something to put an end to it? " he  
ked the doctor at last.

But the doctor shook his head.

" She can't last many days now, Mr. Morel," he said.

Paul went indoors.

" I can't bear it much longer; we shall all go mad,"  
d Annie.

The two sat down to breakfast.

" Go and sit with her while we have breakfast, Minnie,"  
d Annie. But the girl was frightened.

Paul went through the country, through the woods, over  
the snow. He saw the marks of rabbits and birds in the  
ite snow. He wandered miles and miles. A smoky red  
set came on slowly, painfully, lingering. He thought  
would die that day. There was a donkey that came  
to him over the snow by the wood's edge, and put its  
d against him, and walked with him alongside. He put  
arms round the donkey's neck, and stroked his cheeks  
inst his ears.

His mother, silent, was still alive, with her hard mouth  
pped grimly, her eyes of dark torture only living.

It was nearing Christmas; there was more snow. Annie  
he felt as if they could go on no more. Still her dar  
s were alive. Morel, silent and frightened, obliterated

himself. Sometimes he would go into the sick-room and look at her. Then he backed out, bewildered.

She kept her hold on life still. The miners had been on strike, and returned a fortnight or so before Christmas. Minnie went upstairs with the feeding-cup. It was two days after the men had been in.

"Have the men been saying their hands are sore?" Minnie? she asked, in the faint, querulous voice that would not give in. Minnie stood surprised.

"Not as I know of, Mrs. Morel," she answered.

"But I'll bet they are sore," said the dying woman, she moved her head with a sigh of weariness. "But, at any rate, there'll be something to buy in with this week."

Not a thing did she let slip.

"Your father's pit things will want well airing, Annie," she said, when the men were going back to work.

"Don't you bother about that, my dear," said Annie.

One night Annie and Paul were alone. Nurse was upstairs.

"She'll live over Christmas," said Annie. They were both full of horror.

"She won't," he replied grimly. "I'll give morphia."

"Which?" said Annie.

"All that came from Sheffield," said Paul.

"Ay — do!" said Annie.

The next day he was painting in the bedroom. She seemed to be asleep. He stepped softly backwards forwards at his painting. Suddenly her small voice wailed:

"Don't walk about, Paul."

He looked round. Her eyes, like dark bubbles in her face, were looking at him.

"No, my dear," he said gently. Another fibre seemed to snap in his heart.

That evening he got all the morphia pills there were and took them downstairs. Carefully he crushed the powder.

"What are you doing?" said Annie.

"I'll put 'em in her night milk."

Then they both laughed together like two conspiring men. On top of all their horror flickered this little joy.

Mrs. Morel did not come that night to settle Mrs. Morel. Paul went up with the hot milk in a feeding-cup. It was nine o'clock.

He was reared up in bed, and he put the feeding-cup between her lips that he would have died to save from any harm. She took a sip, then put the spout of the cup away and looked at him with her dark, wondering eyes. He stopped at her.

"Oh, it *is* bitter, Paul!" she said, making a little noise.

"It's a new sleeping draught the doctor gave me for you," he said. "He thought it would n't leave you in such a state in the morning."

"And I hope it won't," she said, like a child.

He drank some more of the milk.

"But it *is* horrid!" she said.

He saw her frail fingers over the cup, her lips making a small move.

"I know — I tasted it," he said. "But I'll give you a clean milk afterwards."

"I think so," she said, and she went on with the draught. She was obedient to him like a child. He wondered if she knew. He saw her poor wasted throat moving as she drank with difficulty. Then he ran downstairs for more milk. There were no grains in the bottom of the cup.

"Has she had it?" whispered Annie.

"Yes — and she said it was bitter."

"Oh!" laughed Annie, putting her under lip between her teeth.

"And I told her *it was a new draught*. Where's that?"

They both went upstairs.

"I wonder why nurse did n't come to settle me down," complained the mother, like a child, wistfully.

"She said she was going to a concert, my love," replied Annie.

"Did she?"

They were silent a minute. Mrs. Morel gulped the little clean milk.

"Annie, that draught *was* horrid!" she said plaintively.

"Was it, my love? Well, never mind."

The mother sighed again with weariness. Her pulse was very irregular.

"Let us settle you down," said Annie. "Perhaps nurse will be so late."

"Ay," said the mother — "try."

They turned the clothes back. Paul saw his mother like a girl curled up in her flannel nightdress. Quick they made one half the bed, moved her, made the other straightened her nightgown over her small feet, and covered her up.

"There," said Paul, stroking her softly. "There — now you'll sleep."

"Yes," she said. "I did n't think you could do the bed so nicely," she added, almost gaily. Then she curled up, with her cheek on her hand, her head snuggled between her shoulder. Paul put the long thin plait of grey hair over her shoulder and kissed her.

"You'll sleep, my love," he said.

"Yes," she answered trustfully. "Good-night."

They put out the light, and it was still.

Morel was in bed. Nurse did not come. Annie and Paul came to look at her about eleven. She seemed to be sleeping as usual after her draught. Her mouth had come a bit open.

"Shall we sit up?" said Paul.

"I s'll lie with her as I always do," said Annie. "She might wake up."

"All right. And call me if you see any difference."

"Yes."

They lingered before the bedroom fire, feeling the night and black and snowy outside, their two selves alone in the world. At last he went into the next room and sat to bed.

He slept almost immediately, but kept waking every now and again. Then he went sound asleep. He started awake at Annie's whispered, "Paul, Paul!" He saw his sister in her white nightdress, with her long plait of hair down her back, standing in the darkness.

"Yes?" he whispered, sitting up.

"Come and look at her."

He slipped out of bed. A bud of gas was burning in the lamp-chamber. His mother lay with her cheek on her hand, closed up as she had gone to sleep. But her mouth had been open, and she breathed with great, hoarse breaths, like snoring, and there were long intervals between.

"She's going!" he whispered.

"Yes," said Annie.

"How long has she been like it?"

"I only just woke up."

Annie huddled into the dressing-gown, Paul wrapped himself in a brown blanket. It was three o'clock. He ended the fire. Then the two sat waiting. The great, snoring breath was taken — held awhile — then given back. There was a space — a long space. Then they started. The great, snoring breath was taken again. Paul bent close down and looked at her.

"Is n't it awful!" whispered Annie.

He nodded. They sat down again helplessly. Again came the great, snoring breath. Again they hung suspended. Again it was given back, long and harsh. The sound, so irregular, at such wide intervals, sounded through the house. Morel, in his room, slept on. Paul and Annie sat crouched, huddled, motionless. The great, snoring sound began again — there was a painful pause while the breath was held — back came the rasping breath. Minute after minute passed. Paul looked at her again lying low over her.

It went on just the same. She lay with her cheek to her hand, her mouth fallen open, and the great, ghoastly snores came and went.

At ten o'clock nurse came. She looked strange and woe-begone.

"Nurse," cried Paul, "she'll last like this for days."

"She can't, Mr. Morel," said nurse. "She can't." There was a silence.

"Is n't it dreadful!" wailed the nurse. "Who would have thought she could stand it? Go down now, Mr. Morel, go down."

At last, at about eleven o'clock, he went downstairs and sat in the neighbour's house. Annie was downstairs also. Nurse and Arthur were upstairs. Paul sat his head in his hands. Suddenly Annie came flying across the yard crying, half mad:

"Paul — Paul — she's gone!"

In a second he was back in his own house and upstairs. She lay curled up and still, with her face on her hand and nurse was wiping her mouth. They all stood round. He kneeled down, and put his face to hers and his arms round her:

"My love — my love — oh, my love!" he whispered again and again. "My love — oh, my love!"

Then he heard the nurse behind him, crying, saying, "She's better, Mr. Morel, she's better."

When he took his face up from his warm, dead mouth he went straight downstairs and began blacking his boots.

There was a good deal to do, letters to write, and so on. The doctor came and glanced at her, and sighed.

"Ay — poor thing!" he said, then turned and went.

"Well, call at the surgery about six for the certificate."

The father came home from work at about four o'clock. He dragged silently into the house and sat down. Mother bustled to give him his dinner. Tired, he laid his arms on the table. There were swede turnips for dinner, which he liked. Paul wondered if he would like them.

was some time, and nobody had spoken. At last the son said:

" You noticed the blinds were down? "

Morel looked up.

" No," he said. " Why — has she gone? "

" Yes."

" When wor that? "

" About twelve this morning."

" H'm! "

The miner sat still for a moment, then began his dinner. It was as if nothing had happened. He ate his turnips in silence. Afterwards he washed and went upstairs to dress. The door of her room was shut.

" Have you seen her? " Annie asked of him when he came down.

" No," he said.

In a little while he went out. Annie went away, and Paul called on the undertaker, the clergyman, the doctor, the registrar. It was a long business. He got back at nearly eight o'clock. The undertaker was coming soon to measure for the coffin. The house was empty except for her. He took a candle and went upstairs.

The room was cold, that had been warm for so long. Flowers, bottles, plates, all sick-room litter was taken away; everything was harsh and austere. She lay raised on the bed, the sweep of the sheet from the raised feet was like a clean curve of snow, so silent. She lay like a maiden asleep. With his candle in his hand, he bent over her. She lay like a girl asleep and dreaming of her love. The mouth was a little open, as if wondering from the suffering, but her face was young, her brow clear and white as if life had never touched it. He looked again at the eyebrows, at the small, winsome nose a bit on one side. She was young again. Only the hair as it arched so beautifully from her temples was mixed with silver and the two simple plaits that lay on her shoulders were filigree of silver and brown. She would wake up. He could lift her eyelids. She was with him still. He

and kissed her passionately. But there was coldness against his mouth. He bit his lip with horror. Looking at her, he felt he could never, never let her go. No. He stroked the hair from her temples. That, too, was cold. He saw the mouth so dumb and wondering at the hurt. Then he crouched on the floor, whispering to her:

“Mother, mother!”

He was still with her when the undertakers came, young men who had been to school with him. They touched her reverently, and in a quiet, businesslike fashion. They did not look at her. He watched jealously. He and Annie guarded her fiercely. They would not let anybody come to see her, and the neighbours were offended.

After a while Paul went out of the house, and played cards at a friend's. It was midnight when he got back. His father rose from the couch as he entered, saying in a plaintive way:

“I thought tha wor niver comin', lad.”

“I did n't think you 'd sit up,” said Paul.

His father looked so forlorn. Morel had been a man without fear — simply nothing frightened him. Paul realized with a start that he had been afraid to go to bed, alone in the house with his dead. He was sorry.

“I forgot you 'd be alone, father,” he said.

“Dost want owt to eat?” asked Morel.

“No.”

“Sithee — I made thee a drop o' hot milk. Get it down thee; it 's cold enough for owt.”

Paul drank it.

“I must go to Notttingham to-morrow,” he said.

After a while Morel went to bed. He hurried past the closed door, and left his own door open. Soon the son came upstairs also. He went in to kiss her good-night, as usual. It was cold and dark. He wished they had kept her fire burning. Still she dreamed her young dream. But she would be cold.

“My dear!” he whispered. “My dear!”

And he did not kiss her, for fear she should be cold and strange to him. It eased him she slept so beautifully. He shut her door softly, not to wake her, and went to bed.

In the morning Morel summoned his courage, hearing Annie downstairs and Paul coughing in the room across the landing. He opened her door, and went into the darkened room. He saw the white uplifted form in the twilight, but her he dared not see. Bewildered, too frightened to possess any of his faculties, he got out of the room again and left her. He never looked at her again. He had not seen her for months, because he had not dared to look. And she looked like his young wife again.

"Have you seen her?" Annie asked of him sharply after breakfast.

"Yes," he said.

"And don't you think she looks nice?"

"Yes."

He went out of the house soon after. And all the time he seemed to be creeping aside to avoid it.

Paul went about from place to place, doing the business of the death. He met Clara in Nottingham, and they had tea together in a café, when they were quite jolly again. She was infinitely relieved to find he did not take it tragically.

Later, when the relatives began to come for the funeral, the affair became public, and the children became social beings. They put themselves aside. They buried her in a furious storm of rain and wind. The wet clay glistened, all the white flowers were soaked. Annie gripped his arm and leaned forward. Down below she saw a dark corner of William's coffin. The oak box sank steadily. She was gone. The rain poured in the grave. The procession of black, with its umbrellas glistening, turned away. The cemetery was deserted under the drenching cold rain.

*Paul went home and busied himself supplying*

"They look all right. But there's some water 'em yet."

"And what about it?"

"Come and look."

Paul reluctantly got out of bed and went to look the rather handsome legs of the other man that were covered with glistening, dark gold hair.

"Look here," said Dawes, pointing to his shin. "Look at the water under here."

"Where?" said Paul.

The man pressed in his finger-tips. They left little dents that filled up slowly.

"It's nothing," said Paul.

"You feel," said Dawes.

Paul tried with his fingers. It made little dents.

"H'm!" he said.

"Rotten, is n't it?" said Dawes.

"Why? It's nothing much."

"You're not much of a man with water in your legs."

"I can't see as it makes any difference," said Morel.  
"I've got a weak chest."

He returned to his own bed.

"I suppose the rest of me's all right," said Dawes, and he put out the light.

In the morning it was raining. Morel packed his bag. The sea was grey and shaggy and dismal. He seemed to be cutting himself off from life more and more. I gave him a wicked pleasure to do it.

The two men were at the station. Clara stepped out of the train, and came along the platform, very erect and coldly composed. She wore a long coat and a tweed hat. Both men hated her for her composure. Paul shook hands with her at the barrier. Dawes was leaning against the bookstall, watching. His black overcoat was buttoned up to the chin because of the rain. He was pale with almost a touch of nobility in his quietness. He came forward, limping slightly.

"You ought to look better than this," she said.

"Oh, I'm all right now."

The three stood at a loss. She kept the two men hesitating near her.

"Shall we go to the lodging straight off," said Paul, or somewhere else?"

"We may as well go home," said Dawes.

Paul walked on the outside of the pavement, then awes, then Clara. They made polite conversation. The tting-room faced the sea, whose tide, grey and shaggy, ssed not far off.

Morel swung up the big arm-chair.

"Sit down, Jack," he said.

"I don't want that chair," said Dawes.

"Sit down!" Morel repeated.

Clara took off her things and laid them on the couch. he had a slight air of resentment. Lifting her hair with er fingers, she sat down, rather aloof and composed.aul ran downstairs to speak to the landlady.

"I should think you're cold," said Dawes to his wife. Come nearer to the fire."

"Thank you, I'm quite warm," she answered.

She looked out of the window at the rain and at the a.

"When are you going back?" she asked.

"Well, the rooms are taken until to-morrow, so he ants me to stop. He's going back to-night."

"And then you're thinking of going to Sheffield?"

"Yes."

"Are you fit to start work?"

"I'm going to start."

"You've really got a place?"

"Yes — begin on Monday."

"You don't look fit."

"Why don't I?"

She looked again out of the window instead of swering.

"And have you got lodgings in Sheffield?"

"Yes."

Again she looked away out of the window. The panes were blurred with streaming rain.

"And can you manage all right?" she asked.

"I s'd think so. I s'll have to!"

They were silent when Morel returned.

"I shall go by the four-twenty," he said as he entered. Nobody answered.

"I wish you'd take your boots off," he said to Clara.

"There's a pair of slippers of mine."

"Thank you," she said. "They are n't wet."

He put the slippers near her feet. She felt them.

Morel sat down. Both the men seemed helpless, as each of them had a rather hunted look. But Dawes carried himself quietly, seemed to yield himself, while Paul seemed to screw himself up. Clara thought she had never seen him look so small and mean. He was as trying to get himself into the smallest possible compass. And as he went about arranging, and as he sat talking, there seemed something false about him and out of touch. Watching him unknown, she said to herself there was stability about him. He was fine in his way, passionate and able to give her drinks of pure life when he was in one mood. And now he looked paltry and insignificant. There was nothing stable about him. Her husband had more manly dignity. At any rate he did not waft away with any wind. There was something evanescent about Morel, she thought, something shifting and false. He would never make sure ground for any woman to stand on. She despised him rather for his shrinking together, getting smaller. Her husband at least was manly, when he was beaten gave in. But this other would not own to being beaten. He would shift round and round, prowl, get smaller. She despised him. And yet she watched him rather than Dawes, and it seemed as if the three fates lay in his hands. She hated him for it.

She seemed to understand better now about men what they could or would do. She was less afraid.

a, more sure of herself. That they were not the  
ll egoists she had imagined them made her more com-  
able. She had learned a good deal — almost as much  
he wanted to learn. Her cup had been full. It was  
as full as she could carry. On the whole, she would  
be sorry when he was gone.

hey had dinner, and sat eating nuts and drinking by  
fire. Not a serious word had been spoken. Yet Clara  
ized that Morel was withdrawing from the circle,  
ing her the option to stay with her husband. It  
erred her. He was a mean fellow, after all, to take  
t he wanted and then give her back. She did not  
ember that she herself had had what she wanted, and  
y, at the bottom of her heart, wished to be given  
t.

paul felt crumpled up and lonely. His mother had  
y supported his life. He had loved her; they two  
in fact, faced the world together. Now she was  
, and for ever behind him was the gap in life, the  
in the veil, through which his life seemed to drift  
ly, as if he were drawn towards death. He wanted  
one of their own free initiative to help him. The  
er things he began to let go from him, for fear of this  
thing, the lapse towards death, following in the wake  
his beloved. Clara could not stand for him to hold  
to. She wanted him, but not to understand him. He  
she wanted the man on top, not the real him that  
in trouble. That would be too much trouble to her;  
Iared not give it her. She could not cope with him.  
Made him ashamed. So, secretly ashamed because he  
in such a mess, because his own hold on life was so  
ire, because nobody held him, feeling unsubstantial,  
lowy, as if he did not count for much in this concrete  
ld, he drew himself together smaller and smaller. He  
not want to die; he would not give in. But he was  
afraid of death. If nobody would help, he would go  
alone.

*wes had been driven to the extremity of life, u*

he was afraid. He could go to the brink of death, could lie on the edge and look in. Then cowed, afraid he had to crawl back, and like a beggar take what offered. There was a certain nobility in it. As Clara saw, he owned himself beaten, and he wanted to be taken back whether or not. That she could do for him.

It was three o'clock.

"I am going by the four-twenty," said Paul again to Clara. "Are you coming then or later?"

"I don't know," she said.

"I'm meeting my father in Nottingham at seven fifteen," he said.

"Then," she answered, "I'll come later."

Dawes jerked suddenly, as if he had been held on strain. He looked out over the sea, but he saw nothing.

"There are one or two books in the corner," said Morel. "I've done with 'em."

At about four o'clock he went.

"I shall see you both later," he said, as he shook hands.

"I suppose so," said Dawes. "An' perhaps—<sup>one</sup> day—I s'll be able to pay you back the money as—"

"I shall come for it, you'll see," laughed Paul. "I'll be on the rocks before I'm very much older."

"Ay — well —" said Dawes.

"Good-bye," he said to Clara.

"Good-bye," she said, giving him her hand. Then she glanced at him for the last time, dumb and humble.

He was gone. Dawes and his wife sat down again.

"It's a nasty day for travelling," said the man.

"Yes," she answered.

They talked in a desultory fashion until it grew dark. The landlady brought in the tea. Dawes drew up his chair to the table without being invited, like a husband. Then he sat humbly waiting for his cup. She served him as she would, like a wife, not consulting his wish.

After tea, as it drew near to six o'clock, he went to the window. All was dark outside. The sea was re

"It's raining yet," he said.

"Is it?" she answered.

"You won't go to-night, shall you?" he said, hesitating.

She did not answer. He waited.

"I should n't go in this rain," he said.

"Do you *want* me to stay?" she asked.

His hand as he held the dark curtain trembled.

"Yes," he said.

He remained with his back to her. She rose and went slowly to him. He let go the curtain, turned, hesitating, towards her. She stood with her hands behind her back, looking up at him in a heavy, inscrutable fashion.

"Do you want me, Baxter?" she asked.

His voice was hoarse as he answered:

"Do you want to come back to me?"

She made a moaning noise, lifted her arms, and put them round his neck, drawing him to her. He hid his face on her shoulder, holding her clasped.

"Take me back!" she whispered, ecstatic. "Take me back, take me back!" And she put her fingers through his fine, thin dark hair, as if she were only semi-conscious. He tightened his grasp on her.

"Do you want me again?" he murmured, broken.

## CHAPTER XV

### DERELICT

CLARA went with her husband to Sheffield, and Paul scarcely saw her again. Walter Morel seemed to have let all the trouble go over him, and there he was crawling about on the mud of it, just the same. There was scarcely any bond between father and son, save that each felt he must not let the other go in any actuant. As there was no one to keep on the home, and as they could neither of them bear the emptiness of the house, Paul took lodgings in Nottingham, and Morel went to live with a friendly family in Bestwood.

Everything seemed to have gone smash for the young man. He could not paint. The picture he finished on the day of his mother's death — one that satisfied him — was the last thing he did. At work there was no Clara. When he came home he could not take up his brushes again. There was nothing left.

So he was always in the town at one place or another, drinking, knocking about with the men he knew. It really wearied him. He talked to barmaids, to almost any woman, but there was that dark, strained look in his eyes, as if he were hunting something.

Everything seemed so different, so unreal. There seemed no reason why people should go along the street, and houses pile up in the daylight. There seemed no reason why these things should occupy the space, instead of leaving it empty. His friends talked to him: he heard the sounds, and he answered. But why there should be the noise of speech he could not understand.

He was most himself when he was alone, or working hard and mechanically at the factory. In the latter

ere was pure forgetfulness, when he lapsed from consciousness. But it had to come to an end. It hurt him that things had lost their reality. The first snowdrops were. He saw the tiny drop-pearls among the grey. They would have given him the liveliest emotion at one time. Now they were there, but they did not seem to be anything. In a few moments they would cease to occupy that place, and just the space would be, where they had been. Tall, brilliant tram-cars ran along the street at night. It seemed almost a wonder they should be able to rustle backwards and forwards. "Why unable to go tilting down to Trent Bridges?" he asked the big trams. It seemed they just as well might not be.

The realest thing was the thick darkness at night. That seemed to him whole and comprehensible and rest. He could leave himself to it. Suddenly a piece of paper started near his feet and blew along down the verment. He stood still, rigid, with clenched fists, a sense of agony going over him. And he saw again the dark-room, his mother, her eyes. Unconsciously he had been with her, in her company. The swift hop of the paper reminded him she was gone. But he had been with her. He wanted everything to stand still, so that he could be with her again.

The days passed, the weeks. But everything seemed to have fused, gone into a conglomerated mass. He could not tell one day from another, one week from another, hardly one place from another. Nothing was distinct or distinguishable. Often he lost himself for an hour at a time, could not remember what he had done.

One evening he came home late to his lodging. There was a fire burning low; everybody was in bed. He threw in some more coal, glanced at the table, and decided he wanted no supper. Then he sat down in the arm-chair.

He was perfectly still. He did not know anything, yet he saw the dim smoke wavering up the chimney. Presently two mice came out, cautiously, nibbling the fall-

crumbs. He watched them as it were from a long off. The church clock struck two. Far away he could hear the sharp clinking of the trucks on the rail. No, it was not they that were far away. They were in their places. But where was he himself?

The time passed. The two mice, careering with him, scampered cheekily over his slippers. He had not moved a muscle. He did not want to move. He was not thinking of anything. It was easier so. There was no weariness of knowing anything. Then from time to time, another consciousness, working mechanically, flashed sharp phrases.

"What am I doing?"

And out of the semi-intoxicated trance came the answer:

"Destroying myself."

Then a dull, live feeling, gone in an instant, told that it was wrong. After a while, suddenly came the question:

"Why wrong?"

Again there was no answer, but a stroke of hot self-bornness inside his chest resisted his own annihilation.

There was a sound of a heavy cart clanking down the road. Suddenly the electric light went out; there was a bruising thud in the penny-in-the-slot meter. He did not stir, but sat gazing in front of him. Only the mice scuttled, and the fire glowed red in the dark room.

Then, quite mechanically and more distinctly, the conversation began again inside him.

"She's dead. What was it all for — her struggle? That was his despair wanting to go after her."

"You're alive."

"She's not."

"She is — in you."

Suddenly he felt tired with the burden of it.

"You've got to keep alive for her sake," said the will in him.

Something felt sulky, as if it would not rouse.

" You've got to carry forward her living, and what  
he had done, go on with it."

But he did not want to. He wanted to give up.

" But you can go on with your painting," said the  
ill in him. " Or else you can beget children. They  
both carry on her effort."

" Painting is not living."

" Then live."

" Marry whom? " came the sulky question.

" As best you can."

" Miriam? "

But he did not trust that.

He rose suddenly, went straight to bed. When he  
got inside his bedroom and closed the door, he stood  
with clenched fists.

" Mater, my dear — " he began, with the whole force  
of his soul. Then he stopped. He would not say it.  
He would not admit that he wanted to die, to have done.  
He would not own that life had beaten him, or that  
death had beaten him.

Going straight to bed, he slept at once, abandoning  
himself to the sleep.

So the weeks went on. Always alone, his soul oscillated,  
first on the side of death, then on the side of life, dog-  
gedly. The real agony was that he had nowhere to go,  
nothing to do, nothing to say, and *was* nothing himself.  
Sometimes he ran down the streets as if he were mad:  
sometimes he was mad; things were n't there, things were  
here. It made him pant. Sometimes he stood before  
the bar of the public-house where he had called for a  
drink. Everything suddenly stood back away from him.  
He saw the face of the barmaid, the gabbling drinkers,  
his own glass on the slopped, mahogany board, in the  
distance. There was something between him and them.  
He could not get into touch. He did not want them;  
he did not want his drink. Turning abruptly, he wen  
t. On the threshold he stood and looked at the light  
street. But he was not of it or in it. Something s

rated him. Everything went on there below those lamp-shut away from him. He could not get at them. He felt he could n't touch the lamp-posts, not if he reached. Where could he go? There was nowhere to go, neither back into the inn, nor forward anywhere. He felt stifled. There was nowhere for him. The stress grew inside him; he felt he should smash.

"I must n't," he said; and, turning blindly, he went in and drank. Sometimes the drink did him good; sometimes it made him worse. He ran down the road. For ever restless, he went here, there, everywhere. He determined to work. But when he had made six strokes, he loathed the pencil violently, got up, and went away hurried off to a club where he could play cards or billiards, to a place where he could flirt with a barmaid who was no more to him than the brass pump-handle she drew.

He was very thin and lantern-jawed. He dared not meet his own eyes in the mirror; he never looked at himself. He wanted to get away from himself, but there was nothing to get hold of. In despair he thought of Miriam. Perhaps — perhaps —?

Then, happening to go into the Unitarian Church on Sunday evening, when they stood up to sing the second hymn he saw her before him. The light glistened on her lower lip as she sang. She looked as if she had got something, at any rate: some hope in heaven, if not in earth. Her comfort and her life seemed in the after-world. warm, strong feeling for her came up. She seemed to yearn, as she sang, for the mystery and comfort, to put his hope in her. He longed for the sermon to over, to speak to her.

The throng carried her out just before him. He could nearly touch her. She did not know he was there. He saw the brown, humble nape of her neck under its black curls. He would leave himself to her. She was better and bigger than he. He would depend on her.

She went wandering, in her blind way, through

ittle throngs of people outside the church. She always looked so lost and out of place among people. He went onward and put his hand on her arm. She started violently. Her great brown eyes dilated in fear, then went questioning at the sight of him. He shrank slightly from her.

"I did n't know — " she faltered.

"Nor I," he said.

He looked away. His sudden, flaring hope sank again.

"What are you doing in town?" he asked.

"I'm staying at Cousin Anne's."

"Ha! For long?"

"No; only till to-morrow."

"Must you go straight home?"

She looked at him, then hid her face under her hat-brim.

"No," she said — "no; it's not necessary."

He turned away, and she went with him. They threaded through the throng of church-people. The organ was still sounding in St. Mary's. Dark figures came through the lighted doors; people were coming down the steps. The large coloured windows glowed up in the night. The church was like a great lantern suspended. They went down Hollow Stone, and he took the car for the Bridges.

"You will just have supper with me," he said; "then I'll bring you back."

"Very well," she replied, low and husky.

They scarcely spoke while they were on the car. The Trent ran dark and full under the bridge. Away towards Colwick all was black night. He lived down Holme Road, on the naked edge of the town, facing across the river meadows towards Sneinton Hermitage and the steep scarp of Colwick Wood. The floods were out. The silent water and the darkness spread away on their left. *Alone afraid, they hurried along by the houses.*

*Supper was laid. He swung the curtain over*

window. There was a bowl of freesias and scarlet anemones on the table. She bent to them. Still touching them with her finger-tips, she looked up at him, saying:

"Are n't they beautiful?"

"Yes," he said. "What will you drink — coffee?"

"I should like it," she said.

"Then excuse me a moment."

He went out to the kitchen.

Miriam took off her things and looked round. It was a bare, severe room. Her photo, Clara's, Annie's, were on the wall. She looked on the drawing-board to see what he was doing. There were only a few meaningless lines. She looked to see what books he was reading. Evidently just an ordinary novel. The letters in the rack she saw were from Annie, Arthur, and from some man or other she did not know. Everything he had touched, everything that was in the least personal to him, she examined with lingering absorption. He had been gone from her so long, she wanted to re-discover him, his position, what he was now. But there was not much in the room to help her. It only made her feel rather sad, it was so hard and comfortless.

She was curiously examining a sketch-book when he returned with the coffee.

"There's nothing new in it," he said, "and nothing very interesting."

He put down the tray, and went to look over her shoulder. She turned the pages slowly, intent on examining everything.

"H'm!" he said, as she paused at a sketch. "I'd forgotten that. It's not bad, is it?"

"No," she said. "I don't quite understand it."

He took the book from her and went through it. Again he made a curious sound of surprise and pleasure.

"There's some not bad stuff in there," he said.

"Not at all bad," she answered gravely.

He felt again her interest in his work. Or was

'or himself? Why was she always most interested in him as he appeared in his work?

They sat down to supper.

"By the way," he said, "did n't I hear something about your earning your own living?"

"Yes," she replied, bowing her dark head over her cup.

"And what of it?"

"I'm merely going to the farming college at Broughton for three months, and I shall probably be kept on as a teacher there."

"I say — that sounds all right for you! You always wanted to be independent."

"Yes."

"Why did n't you tell me?"

"I only knew last week."

"But I heard a month ago," he said.

"Yes; but nothing was settled then."

"I should have thought," he said, "you'd have told me you were trying."

She ate her food in the deliberate, constrained way, almost as if she recoiled a little from doing anything so publicly, that he knew so well.

"I suppose you're glad," he said.

"Very glad."

"Yes — it will be something."

He was rather disappointed.

"I think it will be a great deal," she said, almost haughtily, resentfully.

He laughed shortly.

"Why do you think it won't?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't think it won't be a great deal. Only you'll find earning your own living is n't everything."

"No," she said, swallowing with difficulty; "I don't suppose it is."

"I suppose work *can* be nearly everything to a man," he said, "though it is n't to me. But a woman only works with a part of herself. The real and vital part covered up."

"But a man can give *all* himself to a work?" she asked.  
"Yes, practically."

"And a woman only the unimportant part of herself?"  
"That's it."

She looked up at him, and her eyes dilated with anger.

"Then," she said, "if it's true, it's a great shame."

"It is. But I don't know everything," he answered.

After supper they drew up to the fire. He swung her a chair facing him, and they sat down. She was wearing a dress of dark claret colour, that suited her dark complexion and her large features. Still, the curls were fine and free, but her face was much older, the brown throat much thinner. She seemed old to him, older than Clara. Her bloom of youth had quickly gone. A sort of stiffness, almost of woodenness, had come upon her. She meditated a little while, then looked at him.

"And how are things with you?" she asked.

"About all right," he answered.

She looked at him, waiting.

"Nay," she said, very low.

Her brown, nervous hands were clasped over her knee. They had still the lack of confidence or repose, the almost hysterical look. He winced as he saw them. Then he laughed mirthlessly. She put her fingers between her lips. His slim, black, tortured body lay quite still in the chair. She suddenly took her finger from her mouth and looked at him.

"And have you broken off with Clara?"

"Yes."

His body lay like an abandoned thing, strewn in the chair.

"You know," she said, "I think we ought to be married."

He opened his eyes for the first time since many months, and attended to her with respect.

"Why?" he said.

"See," she said, "how you waste yourself! You might be ill, you might die, and I never know — be no more then than if I had never known you."

And if we married?" he asked.

At any rate, I could prevent you wasting yourself  
being a prey to other women — like — like Clara."

"A prey?" he repeated, smiling.

He bowed her head in silence. He lay feeling his hair come up again.

"I'm not sure," he said slowly, "that marriage would much good."

"I only think of you," she replied.

"I know you do. But — you love me so much, you  
it to put me in your pocket. And I should die there  
thered."

She bent her head, put her finger between her lips, while the bitterness surged up in her heart.

"And what will you do otherwise?" she asked.

"I don't know — go on, I suppose. Perhaps I shall n go abroad."

The despairing doggedness in his tone made her go her knees on the rug before the fire, very near to

. There she crouched as if she were crushed by something, and could not raise her head. His hands lay quite flat on the arms of his chair. She was aware of them.

felt that now he lay at her mercy. If she could , take him, put her arms round him, and say, "You mine," then he would leave himself to her. But dare ?

She could easily sacrifice herself. But dare she hurt herself? She was aware of his dark-clothed, slender body, that seemed one stroke of life, sprawled in

chair close to her. But no; she dared not put her arms round it, take it up, and say, "It is mine, this day. Leave it to me."

And she wanted to. It called ill her woman's instinct. But she crouched, and dared .

She was afraid he would not let her. She was afraid it was too much. It lay there, his body, abandoned.

She knew she ought to take it up and claim it, claim every right to it. But — could she do it?

impotence before him, before the strong demand of an unknown thing in him, was her extremity. He

hands fluttered; she half lifted her head. Her shuddering, appealing, gone almost distracted, pleaded him suddenly. His heart caught with pity. He held her hands, drew her to him, and comforted her.

"Will you have me, to marry me?" he said low.

Oh, why did not he take her? Her very soul belonged to him. Why would he not take what was his? She had borne so long the cruelty of belonging to him and being claimed by him. Now he was straining her again. It was too much for her. She drew back her head, his face between her hands, and looked him in the eye. No, he was hard. He wanted something else. She pleaded to him with all her love not to make it *her* choice. She could not cope with it, with him, she knew not with what. But it strained her till she felt she would break.

"Do you want it?" she asked, very gravely.

"Not much," he replied, with pain.

She turned her face aside; then, raising herself with dignity, she took his head to her bosom, and rocked him softly. She was not to have him, then! So she could not comfort him. She put her fingers through his hair. She had seen the anguish, the anguished sweetness of self-sacrifice. For the hate and misery of another failure. He could not bear it — that breast which was warm and which cradled him without taking the burden of him. So much wanted to rest on her that the feint of rest only tortured him. He drew away.

"And without marriage we can do nothing?" he asked.

His mouth was lifted from his teeth with pain. She put her little finger between her lips.

"No," she said, low and like the toll of a bell. "I think not."

It was the end then between them. She could not let him and relieve him of the responsibility of himself. She could only sacrifice herself to him — sacrifice herself to him day, gladly. And that he did not want. He wanted to hold him and say, with joy and authority: "S

s restlessness and beating against death. You are mine a mate." She had not the strength. Or was it a mate wanted? or did she want a Christ in him?

He felt, in leaving her, he was defrauding her of life. He knew that, in staying, stifling the inner, desperate him, he was denying his own life. And he did not hope give life to her by denying his own.

He sat very quiet. He lit a cigarette. The smoke went up from it, wavering. He was thinking of his mother, had forgotten Miriam. She suddenly looked at him. Bitterness came surging up. Her sacrifice, then, was less. He lay there aloof, careless about her. Suddenly saw again his lack of religion, his restless instability. would destroy himself like a perverse child. Well, he would!

"I think I must go," she said softly.

By her tone he knew she was despising him. He rose slowly.

"I'll come along with you," he answered.

He stood before the mirror pinning on her hat. However, how unutterably bitter, it made her that he redded her sacrifice! Life ahead looked dead, as if the were gone out. She bowed her face over the flowers. The freesias so sweet and spring-like, the scarlet anemones, flaunting over the table. It was like him to have these flowers.

He moved about the room with a certain sureness of step, swift and relentless and quiet. She knew she could cope with him. He would escape like a weasel out of hands. Yet without him her life would trail on lifeless. Doding, she touched the flowers.

"Have them!" he said; and he took them out of the dripping as they were, and went quickly into the hen. She waited for him, took the flowers, and they stood out together, he talking, she feeling dead.

He was going from him now. In her misery she leaned against him as they sat on the car. He was unresponsive. Where would he go? What would be the end of him?

She could not bear it, the vacant feeling where he should be. He was so foolish, so wasteful, never at peace with himself. And now where would he go? And what did he care that he wasted her? He had no religion; it was all for the moment's attraction that he cared, nothing else, nothing deeper. Well, she would wait and see how it turned out with him. When he had had enough he would give in and come to her.

He shook hands and left her at the door of her cousin's house. When he turned away he felt the last hold for him had gone. The town, as he sat upon the car, stretched away over the bay of railway, a level fume of lights. Beyond the town the country, little smouldering spots for more towns — the sea — the night — on and on! And he had no place in it! Whatever spot he stood on, there he stood alone. From his breast, from his mouth, sprang the endless space, and it was there behind him, everywhere. The people hurrying along the streets offered no obstruction to the void in which he found himself. They were small shadows whose footsteps and voices could be heard, but in each of them the same night, the same silence. He got off the car. In the country all was dead still. Little stars shone high up; little stars spread far away in the flood-waters, a firmament below. Everywhere the vastness and terror of the immense night which is round and stirred for a brief while by the day, but which returns, and will remain at last eternal, holding everything in its silence and its living gloom. There was no Time, only Space. Who could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place, and was in another, that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together. But yet there was his body, his chest, that leaned against the stile, his hands on the wooden bar. They seemed something. Where was he? — one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could not be it. On every side the immense dark silence seemed to

so tiny a spark, into extinction, and yet, almost he could not be extinct. Night, in which every- as lost, went reaching out, beyond stars and sun. And sun, a few bright grains, went spinning round or, and holding each other in embrace, there in a s that outpassed them all, and left them tiny and . So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core igness, and yet not nothing.  
ther!" he whimpered — "mother!"

as the only thing that held him up, himself, amid

And she was gone, intermingled herself. He her to touch him, have him alongside with her. no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His re shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take ection, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.







Silvius Miller

and L. Knopf

stream) Chihuahuan or "Pleasant Valley".  
The river has a large collection  
of fine old Mexican fossils which  
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profit.

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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